

Brood House

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GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON



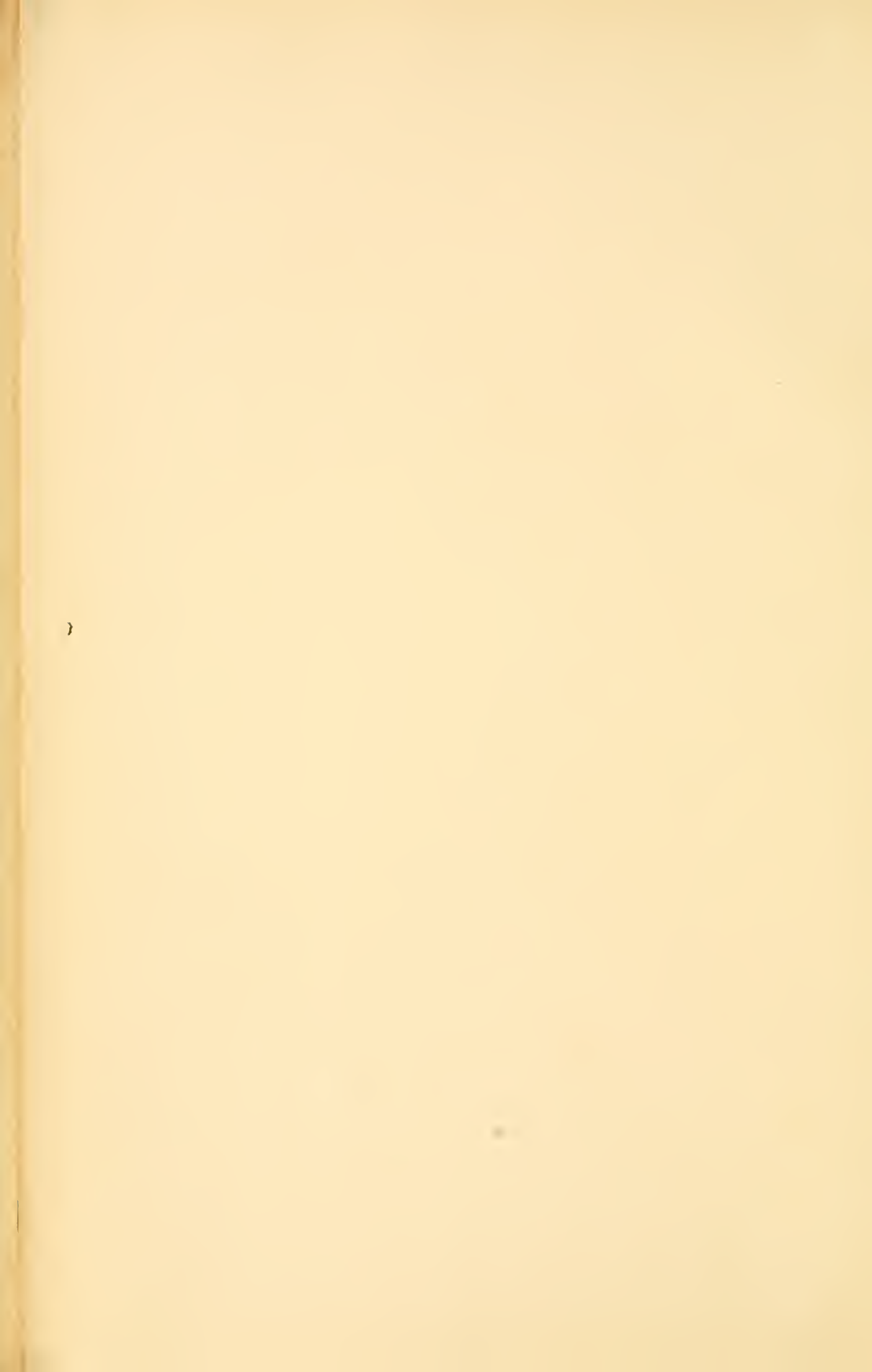
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Brood House

A Play in Four Acts

BY

GEORGE BARR McCUTCHEON



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BROOD HOUSE

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

JAMES BROOD, master of the house.

YVONNE BROOD, his wife.

FREDERIC BROOD, his son.

JOSEPH RIGGS }
DANBURY DAWES } old friends of Brood.

LYDIA DESMOND, Brood's secretary.

RANJAB, a Lascar servant.

BERTIE GUNNING, a New Yorker.

MAISIE GUNNING, his wife.

DOCTOR HODDER, the famous surgeon.

MISS FOLLOWELL, an old maid.

JANEY FOLLOWELL, her young sister.

MISS OLIVER, a nurse.

PARKER, a manservant.

A CHAUFFEUR.

TIME: *The Present.* PLACE: *New York City.*

Act First. JAMES BROOD'S STUDY, 9 P. M.

Act Second. JAMES BROOD'S STUDY, 10 P. M., ten days later.

Act Third. JAMES BROOD'S STUDY, twenty minutes later.

Act Fourth. GARDEN AT JAMES BROOD'S HOUSE, six weeks later.

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ACT FIRST

Time, the present, the month being March. The home of James Brood is one of the old-fashioned houses in lower New York. It is nine o'clock. The curtain rises on a richly-furnished room of a purely oriental type, rather closely boxed. There is a subdued red light from the Indian and Burmese lamps and fireplace at right. The walls are draped with rich oriental hangings, weapons, shields, rugs, etc. A large "Buddha" stands on a pedestal near center of stage, pretty well down, facing a richly carved table of ebony and teakwood. A large white elephant stands on the upper end of the table which is covered with writing materials and books. An oriental tea-table stands at lower left, with an ottoman behind it, in a sort of nook above first entrance, forming a corner which extends into the room for perhaps six feet, running up at an angle. A window into a jade room in this wall is visible. There are oriental chairs

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about the room. This room is Mr. Brood's own and is immediately beneath the roof. In fact, the rear wall is but eight feet high, the ceiling sloping forward and upward with the roof of this particular gable. In the middle of the rear wall there is a large window looking out over the house-tops, the shades being down at present and of a rich oriental color. There is a broad seat in this window, the windows open on hinges, inward. When the shades are up, lights in the upper parts of distant buildings may be seen, with the roofs and chimney pots. The windows form a niche in the wall, apparently a gable. A curtained door opens off R. U. E., while another leads off L. 2 E. into a hall. An Indian buffet stands at the extreme right. On the center table there is a large Burmese gong, by which the servant is called. The door at R. U. E. leads to a stairway, off stage, up which every one has to climb in reaching this room under the roof. One has the effect of seeing all entrants coming up from below.

The stage is empty when the curtain rises.

Enter from R., puffing, two old men, both in smoking-jackets and carpet slippers, carelessly clad in every respect, and not in evening clothes. They are smoking meerschaum pipes. Mr. Joseph

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Riggs is sixty-five, and Mr. Danbury Dawes is a year or two older. They are gossipy, querulous old chaps, lazy and utterly shiftless, worse than two old women. Dawes wears thin gray whiskers and Riggs is close-shaven. A piano in a distant room is playing "La Paloma."

RIGGS. [*Comes down to the table and angrily pushes the papers about, looking at his watch. Both appear to be annoyed, Dawes listening at the door.*] Well, it's nine o'clock. I wonder if he thinks I'm going to sit up all night and wait till he gets through fooling with those ninnies he's got downstairs. I'm getting tired of this sort of thing. I won't stand it. We might just as well be a couple of — er — a couple of — What?

DAWES. [*Coming down, dismally.*] I did n't say what.

RIGGS. You did n't? Well, a couple of what-you-call-'ems. See what I mean?

DAWES. [*Positively.*] Certainly. We might just as well, I agree with you. It's most annoying. But, I — I sometimes wonder if he can help it.

RIGGS. Help it? He did n't have to get married, did he? Answer me that.

DAWES. Now, see here, Joe, don't blame me for

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that. You put everything upon me. You blamed me because it rained yesterday. I —

RIGGS. Forgive me, old man. It's because I'm irritated. Jim treats us like dogs. And dogs sometimes turn, you know. [*Lays his hand on the other's shoulder.*]

DAWES. I thought it was worms, old man, but — but never mind. Will you have a highball? [*Going to the buffet and trying the door. To his surprise it is locked.*]

RIGGS. Well — if you insist. What's that? Locked? Well, I'm damned! Now, that's a deliberate, intentional insult. It's an affront that I can't overlook, Danbury. Can't you find the key anywhere?

DAWES. [*Searching the top.*] It is n't here. I say, Joe, would you mind looking through your pockets? It —

RIGGS. [*Starts to search and then desists, indignantly.*] What do you mean, sir?

DAWES. [*Hastily.*] I meant to say, ring the bell for Ranjab. [*Riggs glares at him for a moment and then pounds the gong viciously.*] Jim's got no right to lock the whiskey up like this. He's never done it before.

RIGGS. Nice way to treat his guests. [*Half cry-*

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ing.] And old friends like we are, too. He forgets that we shared our whiskey with him in the old days — and he needed it, too. I call it most ungrateful.

DAWES. [*Dazed.*] It's that damned wife of his. Joe, we made a terrible mistake in permitting him to get married again. I'll never forgive myself for that. Never!

RIGGS. Danbury, don't blame yourself for that, old pal. I'm as much to blame as you. Besides, confound him, he went off and did it without saying a word to us. I — I don't suppose there's anything we can do about it *now*.

DAWES. No. They've been married nearly a year. But the idea of him bringing a wife in here without saying anything about it. It was sickening. Ring that bell again!

RIGGS. Oh, he *did* telegraph to Lydia. [*Rings gong.*]

DAWES. But Lydia is n't us. *We* were his friends. Who's Lydia? Nobody. He's charitable enough to give her a home here because she's the daughter of dear old Jack. By thunder, he'd never have done this if Jack Desmond were alive. No, sir — ee! As long as Jack was here, there was some order in the house. Poor old Jack!

RIGGS. [*Almost weeping on the other's shoulder.*]

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When Jack died he — he spoiled everything. And, hang it all, he was n't an old man.

DAWES. Well, he 'd been married a long time.

RIGGS. Pooh! He was a widower for ten or twelve years. You forget that.

[Enter Ranjab, a Lascar, leisurely from door at L. Ranjab is a brown-skinned, straight-haired, smooth-faced fellow of fifty, dressed as the ordinary butler. He has small rings in his ears; a set, stern visage.]

DAWES. Who the devil locked this door, Ranjab?

RANJAB. *[Pausing up stage, stoically.]* I did, Mis' Dawe.

DAWES. Well, unlock it.

RANJAB. I have not the key.

RIGGS. Where is it?

RANJAB. It is in the left han' pocket of the master's trousers.

RIGGS. Has he got 'em on?

RANJAB. I have not seen the master since he went down to dinner. *[As an afterthought.]* But there are ladies present.

RIGGS. Ranjab, are you just a dam' fool, or do you think I am?

RANJAB. I came from the East, Mis' Rigg.

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RIGGS. [*Reflectively — to Dawes.*] That means he's a wise man.

DAWES. [*Sputtering bravely, but at the same time a trifle nervously as he advances to Ranjab.*] That's neither here nor there. Ranjab, do you expect us to kick in that cupboard door in order to get a drink? Open it at once, sir! Remember, we are guests in this house and we —

RANJAB. [*Staring straight ahead.*] It is not to be opened.

RIGGS. What! You mean —

RANJAB. The master has given orders, sir. That's all.

DAWES. [*Melting.*] Well, of all the humiliating — oh, oh! Why, that has been an open cupboard ever since we came here to visit Jim Brood, eleven years ago. You know it has! We've had the freedom of that cupboard —

RIGGS. It's dastardly! By gad, sir, I shall leave this house at once. I shall not submit to this indignity. A gentleman is a gentleman, sir! What's that? [*Fiercely to Dawes.*]

DAWES. Confound you, sir, I did n't say he was n't. What the devil are you looking at me for? Ranjab, I'll give you two seconds to open that cupboard, or I'll complain to Mr. Brood.

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RANJAB. [*Merely nods his head and stands passive. The two look at him expectantly for a moment and then bristle.*]

DAWES. Perhaps you did n't hear me.

RANJAB. The master gave strict orders, sir. He has guests for dinner and he is to have them up here afterwards for the magic. He says he will not have his guests find you here drunk as night before last. The ladies thought you were dead. One of them fainted.

[*Exit quietly at L.*]

[*They watch him depart, petrified. Then turn to look at one another, trying to speak, but powerless to do so.*]

RIGGS. [*Gulping.*] What do you suppose is the matter with Jim Brood? Is he crazy? Why, I have n't been drunk in ten years.

DAWES. I don't remember seeing any ladies up here night before last. I sat right there in that chair all evening and I'll swear I did n't see anybody.

RIGGS. All evening? I sat over there on that couch until morning and did n't see anybody. It's a dam' lie, that's what it is.

DAWES. His wife's at the bottom of it. She's a cat!

RIGGS. And after all we've done for him, too.

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[*Sniffing.*] I've stuck by him like a brother for eighteen years. He has no right to forget those days in Turkestan and Thibet. We were good enough for him then.

[*Enter Lydia Desmond, L., sauntering slowly, her hands behind her back, as if in deep thought. She is quietly attired in black, high neck, etc. Hatless. She is young and very pretty, with a thoughtful, sensitive expression. Seeing the two old men, who have turned to stare dejectedly at the buffet, she stops near the table.*]

LYDIA. Oh, good-evening.

RIGGS. [*Turning fiercely.*] Lydia Desmond, your poor, dead father has been insulted in this house to-night. Basely insulted!

DAWES. I should n't be surprised if he were turning over in his grave this very minute.

LYDIA. [*Quietly.*] Dear me, and now what has Mrs. Brood done?

RIGGS. Please don't interrupt! Go on, Danbury.

DAWES. Go on? I can't say any more than that, can I? He could n't stand on his head!

LYDIA. Mr. Dawes! Please, please remember.

DAWES. I beg your pardon, Lydia — a thousand

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times, dear child, and so does Joseph Riggs. [*Crosses to her.*]

RIGGS. What have I to apologize for? But [*quietly*] I do, just the same, dear girl. [*Also crosses.*]

LYDIA. Something has tried you dreadfully, you dear, silly old children. What is it?

RIGGS. Brood has practically ordered us out of his house — after all these years.

LYDIA. I don't believe it. [*She sits in the easy-chair at the desk.*]

DAWES. He never locked anything up when your father was alive.

RIGGS. Lydia, my child, you showed extreme good sense in leaving this house when you did. You have escaped ignomy such as — such as — Oh, by the way, you don't happen to have the key to that cupboard do you?

LYDIA. Oh, that's it, is it? He has at last come to realize that he must keep it under lock and key. Well, you dear old ninnies, it was the only way. Come now, cheer up! He'll unlock it to-morrow. [*She toys absently with a paper-knife.*] Frederic says that you were perfectly disgusting night before last. Mr. Brood was never so mortified. [*She glances at Dawes, who fidgets.*]

RIGGS. [*Glaring at Dawes.*] Yes, and they say

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that one of the women fainted when she saw you. If a man can't drink without making a hog of himself he'd better —

DAWES. If you were not so confounded old, I'd punch your head, Joe Riggs.

LYDIA. Sh! They'll hear you downstairs. There's a dinner party, don't forget.

RIGGS. Yes, and we're left out of it. That's just it. We're chucked off to bed, so to speak. We never get anywhere any more. Is that the way it used to be? No! Oh, it brings tears to my eyes when I think of the jolly times we had here before she came. And, say, Lydia, Frederic used to treat us differently before his new step-mother came, let me tell you that. He treats us — his father's best friends and protectors — as if we were dogs.

DAWES. No, no, Joseph. Permit me to differ. He treats his dogs beautifully.

RIGGS. Right! That woman has turned him against us, his father's oldest friends, Lydia — and she's turned him against you, too — John Desmond's daughter. I notice you did n't stay in the house long after she came. Huh! You were smart enough to get out. You, John P. Desmond's daughter, too. [*Sadly.*] Ah, it was different when we were all living here together. But see what she's

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done! Dawes and I driven out of our own bedrooms and made to sleep in the fourth floor back — the damnedest little room I ever saw — and not allowed to see company when it comes. We're shoosed off like lepers. Are we invited down to their fine dinners? No, sir — ee! Not we! We eat in the butler's pantry. Just where you'd be eating if you had n't gone to live with old Mrs. Davis across the street. Just a common boarder, and your father saved Jim Brood's life three times in the Himalayas, and once in Borneo. It's a fine way he keeps his compact. We four old comrades were to stick together until we died — he swore we should. He has the money — he's always had it — and we have n't a penny, just because we believed in him and did n't think it necessary — er — to save anything. He's got a fine home and he said we'd always have *his* roof over our heads. And your head, too. Now what —

LYDIA. [*Who has been toying with the knife, while Dawes dozes in a chair near by.*] Now, Mr. Riggs, speak for yourself — not for me. I am contented, remember that. Mr. Brood is good to me — he always has been — and he is more than good to you. His wife has a right to conduct her own household as she chooses. She is the mistress; if she chooses

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to have you sleep in the back room, it is her affair, not yours. You can always leave, you know.

RIGGS. You forget, my dear, that we swore on our sacred word to live — intact — under this roof with James Brood. Do you suppose that we can lightly break a promise we made twelve years ago?

DAWES. [*Correcting.*] Eleven — eleven years.

RIGGS. And yet, I am tempted to do it, 'pon my soul. I'm tired of being put upon. She has spoiled everything, coming into the family like this. Why, hang it all, she has the best bedroom in the house — the one I used to have. See — you can see it from here. *Going up and pointing off L. through the big windows, downward, as if to the second floor.*] It faces the garden and has the only balcony about the place. It makes me mad every time I see her standing out there, looking at the moon, surrounded by vines and honeysuckles — and — all that sort of thing. She knows when I'm looking, too; she poses.

DAWES. Hang me, if I'd look at her.

RIGGS. You! You've got the opera glasses all the time. [*To Lydia.*] We can see quite plainly from our room, my dear.

LYDIA. For shame. To peep.

DAWES. Well, she's good-looking, in a way. And, hang it all, we're not much older than Jim Brood.

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He's fifty if he's a day. The idea of him marrying a woman of thirty. I'll bet my hat, she serves him just as rotten as the other one did.

LYDIA. Remember, you are not to talk scandal.

RIGGS. Well, his first wife did run away with her music master, did n't she? That's not idle gossip. Even her husband knew that — and her son ought to know it by this time.

LYDIA. But that was more than twenty years ago. Why bring it up now? Mr. Brood is happy. He has forgotten her.

DAWES. Took him a long time to do it, my dear. That's how he happened to be roaming all over the world like a lost soul for years and years, leaving this comfortable house that his granddad built for all the little Broods to come. He was nearly all in when we met him in Calcutta. That was twenty years ago, and we've never been separated since that day. Your father and Joe Riggs and I, we three, came upon him in a den of iniquity in Calcutta. We took him up, and if I do say it, we saved him, stranger though he was. Your father has told you how the four of us roamed in all parts of the world for nearly ten years. Jim Brood has a fortune, but he did n't object to helping us look for three more. We — we never found 'em, as you know.

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LYDIA. Poor old dad! It was n't a fortune he sought.

RIGGS. He was after knowledge. I never knew such a man for exploring. Danbury, do you remember that trip into Central Africa in search of the mysterious pygmy people? 'Gad, that *was* an expedition. We lived for months on —

LYDIA. I know, Mr. Riggs. I've heard of it a thousand times. My mother kept his letters, and I still have them. I know his letters by heart. Mr. Brood wants to put them into the new book. He has offered to pay me for them, but I — of course, I can't accept anything for them. They really are a part of the book, don't you think?

DAWES. The best part of it, I'd say. I say, Lydia, how far along are we in the work?

LYDIA. Mr. Brood expects to finish your expedition into Thibet next week. I have brought back the last batch of manuscript and notes, which I finished copying to-day. He wants to read the last chapter aloud to his friends to-night. It's a particularly thrilling adventure.

RIGGS. If your father only could have lived until we finished the work. Ah, he could write!

LYDIA. Mr. Brood is splendid. There could be no improvement.

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RIGGS. I'd like to see how he'd get along if he did n't have Danbury and me to help him. Why, we really suggest nearly everything.

DAWES. And I'll bet my hat we don't get a word of credit when the thing is published. It will be all Brood. His wife will see to that. We won't even be paid for our part of the work. You get something out of it as his secretary.

RIGGS. Twenty-five dollars a week! No girl on earth ever was worth that much.

LYDIA. Oh, boys, boys! Be quiet! Don't nag so. I am so tired I scarcely can hold up my head. [*She drops forward, whereupon both men are instantly solicitous — fanning her and patting her shoulders.*]

DAWES. Don't, don't, Lydia! Don't cry. Joseph, do you see what I mean when I say it is criminal to keep that cupboard locked? Kick in the door, Joseph. I'll stand by anything you do.

[*Enter Frederic Brood, L., stopping just inside the door with a movement of annoyance at seeing the others there. He is a tall youth of twenty-one or twenty-two, dark-skinned and eager-eyed. His face has an insolent, overbearing expression; his voice is sharp and imperative. After a quick glance of indecision down the stairway, he*

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comes forward, stopping near the table to look in wonder at the bent head of the girl.]

FREDERIC. [*Turning savagely to the two old men, who fall back timorously.*] What have you been saying to her? [*Lydia rises instantly and pulls herself together.*]

LYDIA. [*Hastily.*] Nothing, Frederic, — nothing! I was just complaining of a — of a headache.

RIGGS. She's got a perfect right to have a headache, Frederic.

FREDERIC. [*Grossly, to both men.*] Get out!

DAWES. But your father asked us to wait for him here.

FREDERIC. He thinks you're in bed.

RIGGS. I never expected to live to hear the son of James Brood speak like this to me. Your father's life-long friend —

FREDERIC. Get out, I say. Don't go, Lydia.

LYDIA. You should n't speak like that to the poor boys, Frederic.

DAWES. I'll stay right here until your father tells me to go. I don't recognize your authority, young man. [*He goes over with great dignity and sits upon the divan in the corner.*]

RIGGS. I don't believe that even your father's wife

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can turn him completely against us. She'd like to see us in the gutter or the poorhouse —

FREDERIC. That will do, Mr. Riggs. You talk too much!

RIGGS. I won't stand any more of — [*looks quickly about and sees that Dawes has left him. His nerve fails. Then, bracing up, he walks stiffly over and sits down beside his friend.*]

DAWES. [*Angrily.*] You *do* talk too much.

LYDIA. [*Smiling sadly, as they look at the stiff old men.*] Frederic, you are too harsh with them. You once were so kind and patient. They — they can't understand the change.

FREDERIC. Oh, they get on my nerves.

LYDIA. [*After a moment's look at his sullen face.*] Mrs. Brood's nerves are affected by them, too.

FREDERIC. [*Roughly.*] Well, what's that got to do with it?

LYDIA. And you've never spoken to me in just that tone before. Good-night! Will you tell your father I could n't wait?

FREDERIC. Wait a minute, Lydia. I'm sorry. I did n't mean to be rough. I'm — I'm not well. 'Gad, I believe I've got a fever. Don't go — I — I have n't treated you as nicely as I should of late. I'm worried about business. I say, Lydia, wait for me

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in the picture gallery. I'll be there in a minute or so. [*Points off L.*]

LYDIA. Don't be hard on the poor old boys. [*Going, with a smile of happiness in her eyes, lighting up a face that had been somber and hurt.*]

FREDERIC. I'll promise. They don't deserve kindness, though. They're the worst old meddlers and busybodies in the universe, Lydia. They're regular cats. Why, they've gone to father with complaints against Mrs. Brood. Who are they? Pensioners, that's all. He's keeping 'em for the rest of their useless old lives — out of pure sentiment.

LYDIA. Please, please, Frederic. You must not forget that I am a charity patient.

FREDERIC. Oh, nonsense! It is n't the same. Your father was a big man. He was a real help to Dad. These old guys are bluffs. Look at them! [*They smile at the picture of the old men pouting.*]

[*Enter Mrs. Brood quickly, R., stopping just inside the door. She is attired in evening gown of black, covered with spangles. Dark, Hungarian type. A huge ruby sunburst hangs from her neck, gleaming against the white skin, the only bit of color about her. The others turn at once, Frederic stepping forward, with a nervous, apologetic air.*]

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MRS. BROOD. [*Coming down, smiling graciously upon Lydia.*] Why, good-evening, Miss Desmond. So good to see you. Are — are you stopping over night? [*Drawling, with a perceptible sneer.*]

LYDIA. [*Palpably embarrassed and wounded.*] No, Mrs. Brood. Mr. Brood asked me to come over with the last bit of manuscript. I was to wait for him — for you all up here. [*Suddenly cold and dignified.*] No, I'm not stopping over night. [*To Frederic, who is fidgeting nervously.*] I'll wait in the picture gallery, Frederic.

[*Exit Lydia, L.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Looking after her with a smile of derision, then turning to Frederic, softly, reprovingly.*] You should n't have secrets from your mother. I thought that was all over.

FREDERIC. [*Biting his lips.*] Oh, she's all right, Yvonne. I did n't know she was here. Dad's very fond of her.

MRS. BROOD. [*Eying him mockingly.*] You've always told me that. She's not fond of me.

FREDERIC. [*Wryly.*] Well, you're not especially fond of her. She is a fine girl.

MRS. BROOD. I daresay. You've known her so much longer than I. You see, she chose to move out when I moved in.

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FREDERIC. Oh, I say, now — that sounds rather —
[*He suddenly remembers the two old men, and, after a quick glance, leans over and whispers an injunction in her ear, which causes her to look upon the old men for the first time. She sees Riggs with his hand to his ear in effort to hear their remarks from across the room. Both old men still are sitting stiffly, but trying to see the others out of the corners of their eyes.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Coldly.*] You said there would be no one up here.

FREDERIC. Well, I told them to get out.

[*Mrs. Brood crosses slowly towards Riggs and Dawes, a hard smile on her lips. As she approaches, they nervously begin to adjust their ties and “pretty up” generally, arising with some celerity.*]

RIGGS AND DAWES. Good-evening, Mrs. Brood.

MRS. BROOD. [*Still smiling, and after a deliberate pause.*] Good-night!

[*They stare irresolutely for a moment and then bow meekly.*]

RIGGS AND DAWES. Good-night, Mrs. Brood.

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[They cross hastily toward the door at L., very stiff-backed. Frederic has walked up and is standing near the window, his hand to his mouth.]

RIGGS. *[To Dawes in a sharp undertone.]* And just to think of it, Danbury, we used to stand up and fight tigers in India.

[Exit Riggs and Dawes hastily L.]

FREDERIC. *[Coming down, ruefully.]* Poor old boys!

MRS. BROOD. *[Coolly, sitting on the divan.]* Is this an inebriates' asylum? Or a home for sentimental paupers? Please, Frederic, remember that I am of quite another world. Your father told me of you, but he did n't tell me of the "old boys." He told me of this great old-fashioned house, and of this den on the top floor, and the jade room there, and the picture room down the hall, and — and of Buddha to whom he tells his secrets when the rest of us are asleep. I expected all of these things, but not the "poor old boys." They spoil the fairy story, Frederic.

FREDERIC. *[Sitting behind her.]* But they were his pals and he loves them. Of course, I can see how they might not have appealed to you.

MRS. BROOD. They don't like me. Why should I like them?

FREDERIC. They 're jealous.

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MRS. BROOD. Of me? Pooh! Your milk and white young lady does n't like me, either. Is she also jealous?

FREDERIC. She is not in love with father.

MRS. BROOD. But she is in love with my step-son.

FREDERIC. Step-son! You have no idea how funny it sounds to hear you call me step-son. Why, you seem no older than I. [*Eagerly.*]

MRS. BROOD. Nonsense! I'm ages older than you. [*Impressively.*] And a Hungarian woman at twenty-nine is ten years older than an American man at thirty-nine.

FREDERIC. 'Gad, I believe you — in everything but looks.

MRS. BROOD. You like me a little — now, don't you? A little better every day? You don't hate your step-mother, as most boys do?

FREDERIC. [*Feverishly, held by her eyes.*] Why, you're the most wonderful creature in the world. You've made me care for you. I hated you when you first came here as my father's wife. You understand. That was natural. I could n't help it. No more could I help changing when I found how lovely, how perfect you are.

MRS. BROOD. [*Derisively.*] I shall try to be a good mother to you.

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FREDERIC. Oh, that's rubbish! I don't think of you as a step-mother. You're not that, really. You're a pal — a pal, that's all. Yvonne, do you know that you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen? You are —

MRS. BROOD. [*Languidly.*] But you are very young. You will see a great many other women.

FREDERIC. It won't make any difference. They won't be like you. I don't care if you are Dad's wife — I lie awake all night sometimes, thinking of you. I can't help it. Good Lord, to think of you married to a man as old as Dad! Why it's — it's like a dream.

MRS. BROOD. A bad dream? [*She sits at the left of the table.*]

FREDERIC. Yes! Hang it all, a bad dream.

MRS. BROOD. But think of what you might have got for a step-mother.

FREDERIC. I suppose that was Dad's lookout. [*Stares at the floor.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*After looking at him for some time, calculatingly.*] It hurt me very much when you first refused to see me, Frederic. I am very proud, you know. I did not dream that my coming would drive you out of your home. If I had known — ah, well, I might not have come at all.

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FREDERIC. [*Absently.*] I wonder if I ever could have found you if you had n't come here, just as you have.

MRS. BROOD. [*Smiling faintly.*] That was a very queer thing to say.

FREDERIC. What I meant was — Oh, I don't know just what I meant. [*Thoughtfully.*] I say, you must have been dreadfully hurt when you found I'd left home for Europe after hearing that Dad was bringing a new wife here from Vienna. I swore I'd never come back. 'Gad, how little I knew what you'd be like. Just think of it, Yvonne, I've missed eight months of being with you — of being near you. What an ass!

MRS. BROOD. A son never grows so old but that he thinks he is wiser than his father. Now you've been home for a month. Was n't your father a wise man? You hesitate?

FREDERIC. [*After a pause.*] I was figuring how old he'll be when you are thirty-five.

MRS. BROOD. He'll be both older and wiser, my son.

FREDERIC. [*Struck by the remark.*] I wonder what that means.

MRS. BROOD. [*With an inscrutable smile and a languishing expression that causes him to draw nearer.*] It's a wise father that knows his own child.

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FREDERIC. Oh, you think he does n't know me?

MRS. BROOD. [*Softly.*] Not yet.

FREDERIC. [*Palpably puzzled.*] This is getting too deep for me. But, in any event, he's never taken much trouble to find me out. [*Bitterly.*] You've been very good to overlook that outburst of mine the other night.

MRS. BROOD. You were beside yourself. You did not know.

FREDERIC. [*Doggedly.*] Oh, yes, I did know. I've stood it for years. It has been ground into me until it's become part of my nature. That's why men — fellows of my age, my own classmates — always looked upon me as a surly, unfriendly chap; that's why men show an aversion, a plain dislike for me. It's because I've always been unhappy; I've never been loved, never been wanted. That's it! I can't help it! I must say it again. Somehow I can talk to you about it. I've never told another soul — I could n't do that. But my father has paid no more attention to me than if I had been a cobble-stone out there in the alley. Somehow, Yvonne, I don't feel as though I am talking to his wife. You don't seem like that to me. You understand me. No one else does — not even he.

MRS. BROOD. Is it for this that you asked me to

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come up here ahead of the others? Dear me, I felt a thrill of something else. But I see now it was only to console the baby of the family. His papa has neglected him, poor darling.

FREDERIC. I beg your pardon, Yvonne. I — I thought you 'd understand. You 've become so much to me that I — I forgot that I 'm talking about your — your husband.

MRS. BROOD. You *are* talking about my husband.

FREDERIC. Still, confound it, he 's really closer to me than he is to you. I 'm his son. That 's blood, you know.

MRS. BROOD. But it 's a far cry from a cobblestone in the alley to a loving wife. There 's more than one kind of blood, Frederic.

FREDERIC. Do you know, I believe it 's those mysterious things you say that make me think so much of you. And the way you look at me sometimes.

MRS. BROOD. And you don't hate me any longer?

FREDERIC. Why, I adore you. I do! I 'd die if you were to leave me now. You can't possibly know how much you mean to me. I —

MRS. BROOD. Sh! This is the other kind of blood I referred to. It is not good in you. Be careful!

FREDERIC. 'Gad, I wish I knew how to describe

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my feelings without having you feel that I'm a rotten bounder.

MRS. BROOD. Please leave it to my imagination. That is better. And now, change the subject. I can't bear to hear myself talked about. Tell me truly, are you in love with Lydia Desmond?

FREDERIC. [*Speechless for a moment, and confused.*] Why — Why — oh, that was nothing.

MRS. BROOD. Then you were in love with her? Pah! I might have known it. You are, now that I read you well, just the sort who would be carried away by a lily-white, bloodless creature such as she is. Why don't you marry her? How pretty it will be! How homelike! Why — [*leaning forward suddenly*] — how wonderfully respectable her kisses would be! A peck or two, that's all, and you'd think you'd been really loved! Not the warm, hungry, endless kiss of hot red lips that burn and quiver with the passion of a real, a big, an amorous love! No, no! Not that kind of a kiss! The very proper peck of a *good* girl! How nice!

FREDERIC. [*Beside himself.*] Yvonne! Yvonne!

MRS. BROOD. Forgive me! I did not mean to hurt you. I was unkind when I only meant to be witty. You love her. That is as it should be. She is a good girl.

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FREDERIC. Oh, that's all over! It was nothing. A fellow has to have a sweetheart or two before he really comes to the one who counts. It was all over long ago between Lydia and me.

MRS. BROOD. How long ago?

FREDERIC. Oh, ages.

MRS. BROOD. It was not over when you left home to go to Europe — before I came, was it?

FREDERIC. Oh, practically.

MRS. BROOD. You wrote to her daily, did n't you? It was n't over when you first came back a month ago, was it?

FREDERIC. Really, Yvonne, — I — I can't discuss Lydia, you know. I can only say that it's all over — and has been for some time.

MRS. BROOD. You are sure?

FREDERIC. [*Impelled by her eyes.*] Sure! I — I [*reaches for her hand, which she withdraws as she arises abruptly and walks away with a gay smile on her lips.*]

MRS. BROOD. A brand snatched from the burning. I wonder why your father is so long in coming up with the others? He said they should follow at once. It's been most charming, Frederic, to have had this confidential chat with you. We are getting to have a great many of them. Honest confession is good for the soul.

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FREDERIC. [*Coming up to her.*] I would n't care a hang if father and the others never came.

MRS. BROOD. Dear me! How extraordinary. But they can't help it!

FREDERIC. The others bore me stiff — all except the Gunnings — and father hates me, so why should I care? Father! That's a fine name to me! I did n't know him even as a man until I was past fifteen. You never knew that he left me here in this old house when I was less than a year old, in the care of his sister and the servants, and never came near me until I was fifteen. He went away right after my mother — left. He forgot that I was on earth. And when he did come back it was only because his sister had died and something had to be done with me. He put me in a school — then I went to college — and it was not until I came out, soured and embittered against the whole world, that he condescended to invite me into his heart as if he were asking me as a casual stranger to come in and have supper with him. A fine lot of fatherly love and care and inspiration I've had! I boil every time I think of it.

MRS. BROOD. Don't think of it.

FREDERIC. Don't! You've never had any one treat you like a dog or you would not say that. Does he care for me now? Can you see anything

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but cold indifference in his attitude toward me? And what have I done to deserve this? What have I done? And I believe, as I believe in heaven, that he hated my mother and hates the memory of her still.

MRS. BROOD. [*Suddenly stiff and staring at him with wide, fierce eyes.*] He hated your mother? Has he ever said so to you? Tell me — speak!

FREDERIC. He's never mentioned her name to me. I never saw her. She left him when I was less than a year old. I can't remember her face. There are no pictures, no photographs — nothing left of her. I believe he drove her away. She died abroad.

MRS. BROOD. Yes, she died abroad — in Vienna, where he married her. That much I know. I — I can't believe that he was cruel to her. He loves *me* so, — yes, I know he *can* love. [*Searching his face intently.*]

FREDERIC. That's the strange part of it. I can't imagine him loving any one or anything.

MRS. BROOD. Sh! They are coming. [*Looks at him keenly for a moment, a queer smile in her eyes.*] I hope he may never drive me away!

FREDERIC. If he does, by heaven, I'll go with you!

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[Enter Mr. Gunning and the elder Miss Followell, L., coming upstairs. He is a very dandyish chap of twenty-eight with a blasé air; loud voice; an incessant cigarette smoker. Miss Followell is in evening dress of considerable beauty — green and black stripe effect. She wears glasses and is about forty.]

GUNNING. There! Quite a climb, is n't it? Makes a fellow puff a bit. Hello! Here you are. [*Crosses with Miss Followell toward Mrs. Brood and Frederic, who are standing at the table. Frederic is lighting a cigarette, his hand shaking violently. Miss Followell is staring about her.*] Ripping good dinner, Mrs. Brood. Can't tell you how I enjoyed those — er — those — what the deuce were those things?

MRS. BROOD. Mushrooms?

GUNNING. Yes — that 's it — mushrooms. Didn't you, Miss Followell?

MISS FOLLOWELL. [*Still staring.*] I think they 're the most extraordinary rooms.

GUNNING. [*Stares at her for a moment and then turns to Mrs. Brood.*] You said mushrooms, did n't you? [*To Miss Followell.*] Not rooms — mushrooms. You eat 'em.

MISS FOLLOWELL. [*Staring.*] I have n't the

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faintest idea what you are talking about, Mr. Gunning.

GUNNING. Don't they have mushrooms in Boston?

MISS FOLLOWELL. [*Sharply.*] Depends on what you call a mushroom. I should n't call *this* a mushroom. [*Crosses to look at shield R.*]

GUNNING. [*Helplessly — to Frederic in an aside.*] Frederic, it was just like that all through dinner. I never knew what she was talking about and she never seemed to catch on to what I was saying. Listen to this: I said to her once that the peach melba was fine and she said something back about what an astounding thing mental telepathy is. When I said what's that got to do with it, she said she could n't help thinking the same as I did about it at precisely the same time. Damn me, it *was* n't the champagne, was it? Who the devil is she, anyway?

FREDERIC. [*His eyes slyly following Mrs. Brood, who has crossed to Miss Followell.*] Oh, she's somebody's daughter from Boston — some professor there who knew Dad in Egypt. They hunted scarabs together, I think. He's always having freaks here to dine.

GUNNING. I like that. You know Mrs. Gunning and I come in pretty often.

FREDERIC. To fill in, old man. Besides he wants

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you to offset the freaks. And Maisie is always ripping at a dinner.

GUNNING. Yes. She talks and never eats. This one does both. I say, her sister, though — the other one — is bully. I'd like to have a chance to talk to her. [*To the Buddha.*] Mind if I smoke, Madam? [*Looking closer.*] By Jove, she's got whiskers. [*Feels them and lights a cigarette.*]

[*Enter Ranjab R., crossing to door L., where he salaams.*]

[*Enter James Brood and Miss Janey Followell, followed by Dr. Hodder and Mrs. Maisie Gunning. Janey Followell is young and pretty and stylish, quite different from her sister. Mrs. Gunning is pretty and smart and about twenty-five. Dr. Hodder is a serious man of forty, with whiskers and glasses and a scientific appearance. Brood is perhaps fifty, tall, straight, severe, smoothfaced, and striking, with gray hair and black eyebrows. Graceful and immaculately dressed. Mrs. Brood and Miss Followell turn toward the newcomers. They are followed soon by a manservant, who brings cigars, cigarettes, and liquors, which he passes from time to time, finally taking his stand near the door at R.*]

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BROOD. This, Miss Janey, is where I work and play and dream and study how to become a real ogre. This is the sometimes forbidden chamber where I chop off pretty young women's heads and hang them from the window ledge as a warning to all other birds of prey. Behold!

JANEY. I should think you'd be a perfectly delicious ogre. Is n't he, Mrs. Brood?

MRS. BROOD. My husband has so very many accomplishments that I have yet to see him play the ogre. He keeps me in his enchanted castle without chains, and that's saying a good deal in this matrimonial day and age. [*Frederic glances across at her sharply and turns away as she smiles upon her husband.*]

BROOD. [*Patting Mrs. Brood's hand softly.*] I'd be an ogre if there was no other way of keeping you. [*She looks into his eyes long and intently, and then catches her breath, a puzzled expression coming into her eyes.*]

MISS JANEY. [*Looking around in ecstacy.*] My father has told me of this room — of all the wonderful rooms in your attic, as he calls it. He says this is as near heaven as he ever expects to get. In fact, he has gone so far as to say it is heaven.

BROOD. That's why all my treasures get here,

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sooner or later, Miss Janey. You must not be surprised if I tuck you away in one of these drawers.

JANEY. Have n't you a waste basket?

[Mrs. Gunning and Dr. Hodder are looking at a collection of knives on the wall at L. — he closely and critically — she yawning broadly. Miss Followell is roaming about up stage — finally stopping before the statuesque Ranjab upon whom she looks with her lorgnette. She touches him and he turns his head. She jumps and moves away, finding that he is really alive. Frederic and Gunning stand near the Buddha, the former looking at Mrs. Brood, the latter at Miss Janey, both of whom are on the opposite side of the table with Brood. Brood is pointing to objects on the table, apparently explaining to the wide-eyed Miss Janey, during the ensuing speeches. Mrs. Brood, eventually catching Frederic's eye, gently motions him toward the corner couch, L.]

GUNNING. *[Sotto voce to Frederic.]* I say, Freddie, she 's a corker, that girl is. No one would dream they are sisters. Are — are you sure about it?

FREDERIC. How should I know? Their parents say they are.

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GUNNING. By 'Gad, I don't believe the report is general, Freddie. Why, this one's a peach. I don't see why Mrs. Brood could n't have put me next her at dinner, instead of the other one. Just my luck. I'd have had a bully time with this one. As it was, the whole damned dinner was spoiled for me. Never had a rottener time.

FREDERIC. You'd better not tell that to Mrs. Brood.

GUNNING. My dear fellow, I did n't say the food was bad. I say, let me take a match, will you? Oh, by George, she's quite alone there. Never mind! Thanks! I'll have a few minutes with her if I die for it. [*Starts toward Janey, as Mr. and Mrs. Brood go up to speak with Ranjab. Miss Followell, coming down, intercepts him, and he suddenly lights his cigarette, looking helplessly over her shoulder.*]

MISS FOLLOWELL. Would you mind telling me, Mr. Gunning, how many cigarettes you smoke in a day?

GUNNING. I would n't mind telling if I knew. You see, I don't count 'em. [*Rather loudly, across her to Miss Janey.*] I never get tired looking at those things, do you? [*Signifying the curios Miss Janey is handling.*]

MISS JANEY. I've never had a chance.

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MISS FOLLOWELL. Don't drop that paper-cutter, Janey.

GUNNING. [*Stepping forward politely.*] Let me hold it for you. If I should drop it, it won't matter, because I'm always breaking things. They rather expect it of me. [*To Miss Followell.*] Have you seen the — er — the Buddha? There it is. [*Turns to Miss Janey.*]

DR. HODDER. [*Studying a knife — Mrs. Gunning plainly bored.*] Most extraordinary knives. I've never seen the wiggly kind like this before. Do you know what they are used for, Mrs. Gunning?

MRS. GUNNING. [*With a casual glance.*] Surgery, Dr. Hodder.

DR. HODDER. Surgery?

MRS. GUNNING. [*Suppressing a yawn.*] The Hindoos use them to remove appendixes with.

DR. HODDER. They do? Impossible! [*Laughs skeptically.*] You forget that I am a surgeon.

MRS. GUNNING. Well, don't you believe you could remove an appendix with that swor — that knife?

DR. HODDER. Not without disaster to the patient.

MRS. GUNNING. But, you see, Doctor, with the Hindoos one never knows which is the patient until after the operation. The patient is the one who dies.

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DR. HODDER. How very amusing. I mean — for the surgeon who was n't the patient.

[*Mrs. Brood comes down to Mrs. Gunning, who is furiously bored.*]

MRS. GUNNING. [*To Mrs. Brood.*] Yvonne, if you ever put me next to that man again, I'll cut your acquaintance. He's the most insufferable bore I've ever had attached to me. How could you? My jaws hurt back here from trying to suppress yawns.

MRS. BROOD. [*Grinning maliciously.*] But he's the most famous surgeon in the country, my dear. Is n't he the great Dr. Hodder?

MRS. GUNNING. Let me tell you something, my dear. I've never met a famous man in my life who was n't as stupid as an ox. Give me jackasses like my husband every time. Gunny does n't always say the right thing about metaphysics but he can tell you whether you do your hair well, which is much more to the point.

MRS. BROOD. And he *does* know how to make love so well.

MRS. GUNNING. [*Proudly.*] Indeed, he does!

FREDERIC. [*Approaching.*] Maisie, behold in me the bearer of glad tidings.

MRS. GUNNING. Anybody I know dead?

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FREDERIC. No. Your husband has fallen desperately in love with Miss Followell.

MRS. GUNNING. Which one?

FREDERIC. The one he is talking to, of course — Miss Janey.

MRS. GUNNING. Splendid! Gunny never does anything vulgar. Now, would n't it be positively vulgar to fall in love with the other one? I should n't forgive him for that.

GUNNING. [*To Janey, Miss Followell having gone over to meet Brood coming down.*] I can't understand why I was n't put next to you at dinner. We'd have got along famously. As it was, I never had a more stupid time. It was like —

MISS JANEX. Pardon me, Mr. Gunning, my sister is never stupid. [*Smiles frigidly and walks over to Brood and Miss Followell. Ranjab has gone to a chest up stage and is taking therefrom a quantity of prestidigitator's articles.*]

MRS. GUNNING. [*To Mrs. Brood.*] Afraid to trust my husband with those very pretty young women? Dear me, no! Give him rope and he'll hang himself soon enough. [*Looking at Gunning.*] Really, he seems to have done it in much shorter order than usual.

BROOD. [*Coming down C. with the Misses Followell.*] Now, my dear Miss Janey, you will be much

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better entertained by Ranjab and his Hindoo tricks than by any wretched story I can tell. Ranjab is really very clever. He was a sure-enough fakir when I came upon him in Delhi. Besides, you 'll get quite enough of me when Miss Desmond reads what we have just written about the last day of our journey to Lhasa. We are just finishing the volume relating to Thibet and —

MISS JANEY. [*Clapping her hands for attention.*] Everybody be quiet! Mr. Brood is going to tell us how he came by that horrid idol thing there. What is it? A Buddha?

BROOD. Hardly. He's a plain, every-day, unvarnished god from the temple in Pewrika. He comes with excellent references, however. A thousand years old, and he can keep a secret.

MISS JANEY. And you kidnapped him? How disgraceful! Now, tell us the story.

BROOD. Every one has heard it a dozen times. Don't ask me to bore my guests.

MISS FOLLOWELL. But *we* have not heard it.

GUNNING. My dear Miss Followell, I went to considerable pains to tell you the story at dinner. Did n't you hear it?

MISS FOLLOWELL. I'm sorry, Mr. Gunning, but you were talking into my deaf ear.

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GUNNING. Deaf? [*Aside.*] By Jove, just think of the things I could have said to her and did n't.

MISS JANEY. Come now, Mr. Brood, you must.

BROOD. [*To Mrs. Brood, who has seated herself on the couch at L., the others, excepting Frederic, having drawn near the table at which Brood stands.*] Shall I tell it, my dear? It's terribly hard on the others.

MRS. BROOD. Why not tell the story to Miss Followell and Miss Janey in the morning? They're not leaving until the afternoon. They may have it at breakfast and luncheon — all about how you looted the temple and made way with his worship, and were shot at by endlessly poor marksmen through hundreds of miles of jungle and were pursued by tigers and cobras and other outraged natives until you were ready to drop for want of water and sleep and food. It's as thrilling as Wilkie Collins' "Moonstone," which I have just read in the ordinary English. Mrs. Gunning has heard the tale a dozen times over, and so has Dr. Hodder. Mr. Gunning even presumes to tell it. So, I'd have it for breakfast.

BROOD. Sensible idea! That clears it up very nicely. We'll have Ranjab's magic with the cigarettes, and then we'll have the trip to Lhasa. Ranjab, are you quite ready?

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RANJAB. [*Coming down and bowing.*] In just one minute, master. [*Goes up.*]

BROOD. [*To Miss Followell.*] He has been my body servant for ten years. I saved him from death in a little town — near Lahore. Ranjab was to have been executed for the murder of his wife. She'd been false to him and he slew her. That kris which you have in your hand, Dr. Hodder, is the very weapon he used. Don't drop it! You, of all men, should not be afraid of bloody knives. Ranjab was in prison. I heard of his unhappy plight. One night, just a week before the execution, my three friends and I stormed the little gaol and rescued him. It was a lark, nothing more. We needed the excitement. You see, we were just getting over the cholera. We got him safely out of the country, and — well, he's been my slave since that night. He says he was born to die for me.

MRS. BROOD. Sometimes I have the feeling — it's dreadful, too — that Ranjab would be especially delighted if he could find some excuse for — [*coolly running her hand across her throat — with a quick laugh and a glance at her husband*] — for slitting my throat — so! Would n't you, Ranjab?

RANJAB. Madam!

MRS. BROOD. My throat! [*Shudders violently, a*

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look of terror in her eyes.] Ah! [The others stare at her in surprise, and she suddenly laughs. Both her husband and Frederic start toward her, the latter turning away as he almost jostles his father, who looks hard at him.]

BROOD. [*Bending over her.*] My dear one, I — I don't understand. Are you playing — are you in earnest? Is it possible that you have the least fear of — of Ranjab? If that is so — if you are nervous — I shall send him away. I'll send my poor murderer away.

MRS. BROOD. After all, he did no more than to kill his *own* wife — why should he kill yours? Don't be silly, James, dearest. I was playing. Fear Ranjab? No, my husband. It is only the faithless wife who is killed, and she by her own husband. Pray proceed with the magic. Come, Ranjab, let us have the celebrated dagger trick.

BROOD. [*Leaning over her, intensely.*] You startled me, Yvonne. If I thought you feared — but no! That can't be. God, my girl wife, I — I love you — I love you with all the love I thought had been dead in me for centuries. [*Frederic lowering up L.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Shrinking down among the cushions — her eyes on his.*] Go back to them. Do the magic. You are attracting attention to me. Can't you see?

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DR. HODDER. [*As Brood crosses to C., the others having begun to grow nervous.*] Mrs Gunning tells me that the natives use this particular sort of an instrument in removing the tonsils from tubercular infants. [*Exhibits the long and ugly sword which he handles.*] Did you find, Mr. Brood, that the Hindoo infants have so much spare neck as all that?

MRS. GUNNING. Doctor, one of the very first things a Hindoo infant is taught is the knack of swallowing a sword. The parents go on the same principle that you American surgeons follow. When you operate to find if there's anything the matter with one's stomach, you whack out the appendix as a matter of expediency, whether it needs to be whacked out or not. So with the Hindoo father, who is always the family surgeon. So long as the infant has already got the sword in there where the tonsils are, why not give it a twist and slice them off? It saves time, and besides, nature did n't intend us anything that could be safely cut out.

GUNNING. Say, Hodder, she's stringing you.

DR. HODDER. [*With dignity.*] My dear Gunny, I hope you have n't got the idea that *I* thought she was in earnest.

BROOD. Come, Ranjab. We are waiting. [*Ranjab comes down with his paraphernalia, which he*

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places on the table. Frederic moves over beside Mrs. Brood, standing before her and speaking in low tones. The others find seats near the magician.] Oh, I say, just a moment. The show will not be complete without the presence of my old comrades, Riggs and Dawes. I told them to come here this evening. Have you seen them, Ranjab?

RANJAB. [*After a moment.*] They were here, master, but — but — [*looks at Frederic and Mrs. Brood.*]

BROOD. They were here? What? Have they fled in terror of this seemly company? Where are they?

FREDERIC. [*Sullenly.*] I didn't know you'd asked them to stay, father. I — I told them you were having guests up here and —

BROOD. [*Who has advanced a step or two and is frowning darkly at his son, speaking with a harsh, cold voice.*] So you took it upon yourself to ask them to get out. Is that what you did? Perhaps it would be just as well for you to curb your authority a bit, my son. I am still here, you know. You will oblige me by going at once to their room, and, after apologizing, ask the gentlemen to step up here at once for the entertainment. I particularly want them to hear what I have written about the trip to Lhasa. Go at once! [*Turns to the company.*] My

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old comrades were with me on that journey. They suffered quite as much as I.

MRS. BROOD. [*Arising and coming towards Brood, while Frederic hangs his head in humiliation and anger.*] James, as it was I who sent the old men away, I think it is I who should go to them, not Frederic. Please punish me. I am the one who has sinned.

BROOD. [*Staring at her.*] You? Yvonne, I,— why, you are trying to shield Frederic, that's all. You always — [*pauses*].

MRS. BROOD. Always what, my dear? [*Looking at him coldly.*] I sent them away. I did not want them here. They irritate me. I always send them away. But I will get them. [*Going.*]

BROOD. [*Interposing himself.*] My dear, I beg your pardon. It was all a mistake. [*Imploringly.*] Pray don't think of it again. You were quite right, if you really feel that they irritate you. I daresay they do. They're queer old customers — hardly ladies' men, good friends. Come, Yvonne, think no more about it. Let them stay where they are. They're in bed, I daresay, and asleep. Come, dear, sit down and we'll go on with the performance.

MRS. BROOD. [*Suddenly patting his hand and smiling.*] You might say you are sorry — to Frederic.

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BROOD. [*His jaw setting — after a moment.*] I am sorry, Frederic. [*Turns to the table as she walks over to Frederic and touches his shoulder gently.*]

FREDERIC. [*In a low, intense tone.*] I'll never forget this, Yvonne. I am shamed to my very soul.

BROOD. [*Suddenly turning to Frederic.*] Has Miss Desmond been here? I asked her to come with the manuscript.

MRS. BROOD. [*As Frederic does not reply, but looks suddenly guilty.*] She is in the picture gallery, James, — waiting.

BROOD. [*To the servant.*] Ask Miss Desmond to come here, Parker. [*Looks hard at Frederic.*]

[*Exit servant L.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Drawing Frederic down beside her on the couch and smiling maliciously.*] You completely forgot the good little girl of peaches and cream, eh? Now I am beginning to feel that you don't care for her. And she said she would wait for you in the gallery! What a nice wait she has been having with the old masters while the young one stops here with his head full of — of other things. [*Eying him languorously.*]

FREDERIC. Don't, please, Yvonne! I — I did forget her. You made me forget her. Can't you see? I —

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MRS. BROOD. Sh! She is here and she is sure to look like a wounded deer. Go to her and make it up.

FREDERIC. [*Gritting his teeth.*] God, I'll never forget the way he spoke to me. He hates me — yes, he does! He never says a kind word to me. To humiliate me before all these people — as if I were a dog. Yes, a dog! He's kinder to those two old loafers. Did you see how he looked at me? That's what I mean when I say that he's never been like a father to me. I — I could have struck him for that look and those words.

MRS. BROOD. [*Gently.*] Poor boy! [*After a long pause, in which she studies his hurt face.*] You — you must be very like your mother.

FREDERIC. [*Bitterly.*] I hope so. I'm not like my father, that's sure — and thank God! Oh, Yvonne, he'll make you miserable — I know he will. He's as hard as steel. I know him, and I say this to you, even though he is my own father.

MRS. BROOD. [*Quietly.*] You must not say such things, Frederic. I cannot permit them. He is my husband. I love him. Do not forget yourself again, sir! [*She smiles slyly as he turns and walks away. Leans back and fans herself.*]

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[Servant and Lydia have entered from L., and she has been introduced to the Misses Followell by Brood during the scene between Frederic and Mrs. Brood. Lydia carries a roll of manuscript.]

LYDIA. *[To Frederic, whom she crosses to meet at L. C.]* You did not come to the picture gallery, Frederic?

FREDERIC. *[Embarrassed.]* I—I tried to, but I could n't get away from these people. *[Lydia glances somewhat scornfully in the direction of Mrs. Brood.]* Why do you look at her? Confound it, Lydia, I don't understand that glance.

LYDIA. *[Smiling faintly before she crosses to R.]* My glance is like the foolish moth. It always seeks the flame.

[Positions as Ranjab begins his dagger trick: Mrs. Brood at L., on the couch, Frederic at L. C., Ranjab at C., left of and near the upper end of the table, Brood leaning with his hands upon the rear end of the table; Mrs. Gunning sitting on the arm of a big armchair at right of table, Miss Followell sitting upon the other, with Dr. Hodder standing behind them; Gunning smoking idly at R. C., seated on a small chair; Miss Janey stands be-

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side Brood, at his left, and Lydia has stopped a little to the left of Miss Janey. Just after Ranjab begins preparations for the trick, Mrs. Brood holds up an unlighted cigarette and motions Fred-eric to her side. He comes over quickly and sits down at her left, scratching a match and holding it up to her cigarette. This is watched by Brood and Lydia. Ranjab should be able to do a dagger trick of some sort and one other mysterious shifting trick in which he would use a china or glass cup, to be shattered in a clumsy mishandling at the proper moment. If this character can prepare some sensationally bewildering trick of the Hindoo type, so much the better. His movements must be silent, mystifying, and very quick.]

BROOD. Ranjab was in his day prime magician to the Rajah of Maltapootja — an extraordinarily honorable post in the cabinet, let me tell you. He could swallow the longest sword of any in the hill country.

HODDER. And he looks as though he could have made other people swallow it with considerable precision, too.

MISS JANEY. Do hurry up! I'm so interested. What's he going to do? Swallow it?

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GUNNING. Yes. You can see where it goes much better if you'll come over here. Front elevation from here, Miss Janey.

MISS JANEY. I'll stay where I am, thank you.

[Ranjab performs the sword swallowing trick, following it with the one in which the dagger is driven through the wrist, or something of that sort, the tricks being received by enthusiastic applause from Miss Followell, Miss Janey, and Dr. Hodder. The others are quite indifferent — in fact, scarcely looking at the performer.]

[Frederic has moved quite close to Mrs. Brood and is looking intently at her profile as she smokes lazily, tantalizingly, occasionally whispering to her. As Ranjab is in the midst of his trick with the glass cup, he suddenly glances toward the two on the couch. He observes Frederic slyly take up the hand of Mrs. Brood and carry it passionately to his lips. Ranjab drops the cup and it smashes. There are startled cries and he looks quickly at his master. Mrs. Brood snatches her hand away, but Brood, who has looked quickly, notes their confusion. Lydia also has started forward, as she has seen the kiss — a look of surprise on her face. As the others crowd about Ranjab, who stands

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shamefaced, Brood steps out and faces Frederic, who also has risen.]

BROOD. [*Turning to Ranjab, who has started to pick up the pieces.*] Wait, Ranjab! You failed with that, eh? Well, get ready for the basket and rope trick. Never mind the pieces. Don't cut yourself with the glass. We can't afford to have our prime magician's fingers jeopardized. Can we, Miss Janey? Frederic, while Ranjab is preparing for the next trick, you will pick up these broken pieces. [*Looking hard at his son and pointing to the glass. Mrs. Brood stares at him with wide-open eyes. Frederic draws back angrily. Lydia starts toward the broken glass as Ranjab moves away bewildered, but Brood steps forward and she turns away, her eyes upon Frederic.*] Pick them up, Frederic.

[Frederic holds back a moment, under the spell of his eyes, and then slinks forward and begins collecting the bits. Mrs. Brood sinks back and puffs her cigarette easily.]

CURTAIN

[End of Act I.]

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ACT SECOND

Scene: Same as Act I. Ten days later. About ten o'clock at night. During the progress of the act, the wind may be heard whistling about the eaves and corners of this upper floor, with an occasional bang of a chimney pot. Sleet blowing against and past the windows. Lights may be seen in upper floors of buildings in the distance when the curtains are drawn.

Discovered: Lydia writing at the table C., papers and manuscripts piled high about her. She is copying from Brood's original manuscript. Brood has replaced his evening coat with a long oriental dressing-gown and smokes a hookah, which stands on the floor beside him. He is at the right of the table, facing it, and the Buddha is hard by his left shoulder. Lydia is in a white shirtwaist and dark skirt, and wears paper cuff-protectors. Ranjab comes in and out of the room, engaged in the task of making hot drinks at the cupboard R. Brood is quietly studying Lydia's bent head after the curtain lifts.

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LYDIA. [*Suddenly lifting her eyes, nervously.*] Is — is there anything wrong with my hair, Mr. Brood? [*Laughs nervously.*]

BROOD. [*In surprise.*] Your hair? How strange! Do you know, I was thinking about your hair, Lydia? There is nothing wrong with it, my girl. It is glorious. Oh, I see, you women can always tell by intuition when a man is looking at your hair. And you always think there's something wrong with it. It's nearly half-past ten. You've been at it pretty steadily this evening, child. I trust you won't go on thinking, as the rest of them do, that I'm a stone-hearted person who has no feeling for others.

LYDIA. I could n't think that, Mr. Brood. You've done so much to make me know that it is n't true. I—I wonder why you say that you are stone-hearted?

BROOD. I don't. It is they who say it. Perhaps it's because I do not smile so often or so politely as I should, but that's my nature, and nature does n't always smile. It is n't smiling now, if you take a look from the window. [*Goes up to window and pulls the curtains aside.*] It's a wretched night — blowing a gale and raining and sleeting by turns. I'm glad you've decided to stay all night, Lydia. It is n't far to your lodgings, but it's a good night to be in doors. [*Comes down.*] You are tired. I can see it

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in your eyes. You 've had a tired look in your eyes for some time, my child. Is the copying too much for them?

LYDIA. [*Quickly.*] Oh, no, no, Mr. Brood. I love to work. I feel as though I have had something to do in the making of a great book. It will be a great book. No one has ever been able to tell the things you can tell of Thibet and its mysteries. More than all am I proud to do my very small share toward giving you the help that poor father might have given had he lived to this day.

BROOD. Your father was my best friend. He was a real nobleman, Lydia. But for him I should have drunk the dregs and been in a suicide's hell long ago. To John Desmond do I owe my life many times over. These two rare old boys who journeyed with us through wild lands and wilder days are but the projected shadows of what I might have been. They came into my life before John Desmond, and I was going down the hill with them at their own merry pace. Then your father came. He lifted me out of the slough and pointed a new way to me. I followed him up out of the depths. Riggs and Dawes came behind me. They lagged behind at first, but they were men and true men, after all. They never deserted me in peace or in peril. I have

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seen Joseph Riggs stand face to face with a tiger to do battle for me when I was ill in the jungle. I have known Danbury Dawes to go without water for days that I might not die of fever. They were men. They are my friends for life. Poor old chaps, they have earned all the peaceful grog that I can give them.

LYDIA. Poor old souls, they are as much interested in this book as — I was going to say as I am — but I mean you. They feel that they have written it with you.

BROOD. [*Smiling grimly.*] If I were to lack anything in the way of narrative, they could supply the missing thread with admirable sang froid and no conscience whatsoever.

LYDIA. Mr. Riggs is especially clever at it, Mr. Brood. He is the most notable story teller I have ever known.

BROOD. If you were going to describe him in shorthand, my dear, it would be much simpler to say liar. My wife does not like them. I can understand it, too. They bore her. There can be nothing in common. They are old and — [*ponders*] — old! I often catch myself wondering how she can care for me. I am old. I am fifty. That is old, my dear, when you think that it is at least twenty years older than she.

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She hates old people. She has said so. And yet — and yet she seems to care for me. [*As she does not respond, he eyes her closely for a moment or two.*] I daresay the two old boys do irritate her. They gossip like old women — God preserve 'em — and they meddle with the liquors more than they should. She likes system and order. They can't understand it. They are just as likely to be found dead drunk in the drawing-room as in the back hall. It's all one to them. They're never quite sober enough to realize that there is a distinction. But I can't turn them out. I promised them, you know. I am sorry, Lydia, that you have chosen to live away from this house. It should have been your home. You shall yet marry from it.

LYDIA. [*Glancing at him covertly.*] Thank you, no. You are kind, Mr. Brood. The man who would marry me must come to my own home for me — no matter how humble it may be. Please don't think I am ungrateful. Your promise to your three old friends included my father — but I am not John Desmond, sir. I have no claim upon you.

BROOD. You are a brave girl. I like your spirit. And you are right, too. [*After a long critical pause.*] I understand quite well, my dear, that you do not like my wife. [*As she starts to protest.*] Please don't

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deny it. I know and she knows it. So long as we all know, there's no real harm done.

LYDIA. She will not let me like her, Mr. Brood. I would, I am sure, if she but came half way to meet me. She does not like me. She has put me in the class of dependents. To her, I am quite on a plane with Joseph Riggs and Danbury Dawes. Yes, Mr. Brood, I feel it. A woman can always feel these things. That is why I left your home, sir. That is why — why I shall be happy when this work is finished next week.

BROOD. Lydia! What do you mean?

LYDIA. That when it is finished I shall then have no excuse for intruding my unwelcome self upon Mrs. Brood. I shall not come here again, Mr. Brood. [*As he stares at her, she continues imploringly.*] You understand, don't you? You don't think me ungrateful! I — I can't come here, Mr. Brood.

BROOD. [*Slowly.*] Lydia, my child, is that the only reason why you do not wish to come here?

LYDIA. [*Confused.*] Why — of course — yes. What other reason could there be?

BROOD. Frederic.

LYDIA. Frederic?

BROOD. Yes. I have not been blind. You love

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him, little girl, and — and you are slowly coming to realize that he is not what you thought he might be.

LYDIA. [*In sudden alarm — comprehending, with a quick, involuntary look at the couch L.*] Mr. Brood!

BROOD. Your eyes are being opened. [*Leaning forward, slowly.*] My child, he was not born to be constant. He was born to prove that honest love is the rarest thing in the world.

LYDIA. I don't understand.

BROOD. No, you do not. But you may understand some day. Frederic has, I've no doubt, told you that he loved you — wait! A year ago, perhaps. He thought he loved you then, just as you thought he did. But he does not love you now. He loves lightly — as [*slowly*] — as his mother did before him. As his father did before him.

LYDIA. [*Bewildered.*] What are you saying to me, Mr. Brood?

BROOD. [*Grimly.*] He looks like his mother — he acts like her — he looks at me as she looked at me, before he was born. He looks as if he realized that I know him to the core — as I knew her. I thank God, Lydia, that you have been saved from him. I saw that you were eating your heart out, wondering, puzzling over his strange, perhaps sudden change of

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front. It was not change of heart, my dear; change of mind.

LYDIA. [*Rising, indignantly.*] Mr. Brood, I cannot listen to this. I do care for Frederic. You have some reason for speaking of this to me — some reason I cannot understand. He does not care for me as he did — but I — I do not hold it against him. I hold it against myself. You have never been kind to him — hear me, please! So long as I have known you both — a good many years, sir — my heart has bled for Frederic. In all that time I have never known you to give him a loving, tender word — never! He felt it — he shrank from it — that, I know. You don't like him, Mr. Brood. I can't see why that should be. But I will not hear you revile him, sir. I will not. If your unkindness had begun but recently I could understand —

BROOD. [*Quickly.*] But recently, you say?

LYDIA. [*Aghast at her blunder.*] I — I mean — so far as I am concerned but recent —

BROOD. [*Looking so hard at her that she stops in affright.*] I think I understand what you mean. Well, it would not be hard to believe even that of him. Blood will tell. Sit down, please. [*She sits down slowly.*] Ranjab! Will you see that Mrs. Brood and Mr. Frederic come up here for their hot

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toddies when they return? Keep the water hot.
Let me know when they come in.

[*Exit Ranjab.*]

[*Leaning forward, deliberately.*] I left the Ratcliffs' dinner early to-night, my child, ostensibly to work with you, but in reality to talk with you. I've been trying to begin the task for an hour. I could n't. First, let me tell you, once for all, that I should never have permitted you to marry Frederic. I could not keep you from loving him — but the other — well, that's what I want to talk about. A moment ago I said that he looked like his mother. Yes, she was very good looking. God, child, she was the most beautiful creature I've ever seen. Would you say that he looks like his father?

LYDIA. [*Blankly.*] Yes — Mr. Brood — I would say that he looks like his father.

BROOD. [*Startled.*] You mean, like me?

LYDIA. Certainly, of course. Like you, Mr. Brood.

BROOD. [*Passes his hand over his brow — hoarsely.*] But I am not his father.

LYDIA. [*Uncomprehendingly.*] Sir?

BROOD. Frederic is not my son.

LYDIA. You — you mean that he is an — an

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adopted son? Oh, I — I don't know why you look at me so steadily. What is it? Yes, I love Frederic — I shall always love him. I cannot tell you how I have suffered in seeing you treat him as you do. He does not deserve it, I'm sure. [*Rises quickly, almost fiercely.*] Even an adopted child has a right to expect kindness, if not affection. It is —

BROOD. He is not an adopted son — he is my son by sufferance. If that boy were my son, Lydia, I would love him as no son ever has been loved in this world. You say I hate him. Can't you see, also, that he dislikes me? He never knew his mother, he never saw his father, but there is a strange instinctive strain in him that tells him to hate me. It is nature, my dear — fed, no doubt, by my own bitter animosity.

LYDIA. Animosity, Mr. Brood? In heaven's name why are you telling me this? Why —

BROOD. I regret to say that I consider it fair to you — and honest to myself. Because I have said that he should not marry you. I see that you don't fully understand.

LYDIA. I only know that you are saying terrible things to me, Mr. Brood, — terrible, inexplicable things. I have felt that I could not hope to be his wife. He will be very wealthy — he has position —

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he has everything that I, as the daughter of John Desmond should not aspire to. But I love him and —

BROOD. He has none of these things, except by sufferance. He is not to have a dollar of my fortune — never. He is not my heir, in any sense of the word. As for position, yours is a thousand fold higher than his. His father was my wife's — his mother's music master. There is not a drop of my blood in that boy's veins.

LYDIA. [*Slowly comprehending.*] I — I understand. Do you realize what you are saying?

BROOD. There is not a shadow of doubt. I have known it for twenty-one years. Twenty-one years ago I drove that boy's mother out of this house. I wonder that I did not kill her. But I kept the boy. [*Laughs coldly.*]

LYDIA. [*Drawing away in horror.*] Knowing that he was not your son, you kept him with you? To punish him some day? To crush him down for what God did for him in the beginning? To wait until this late day to visit the sins of the father upon him? You —

BROOD. No! To make her regret to her dying day that I did not kill her in the beginning. [*Laughs.*] By God, how she begged for him — how she fought

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and pleaded through all those wretched years! No! To punish her! *She* loved him. He was hers! She *was* his mother. And so I kept him from her. She never saw him after she went forth into the street that wintry day. She suffered until the day she died.

LYDIA. She is dead?

BROOD. Ten years ago she died in Vienna — where I married her. God, can I ever forget how I loved her? And how I have hated her! In all these years that boy's mother's face has never been out of my eyes. I can even see something of her eyes, her hair, her manner in the girl who is now my wife. That's why she appealed to me in Paris a year ago, when I first saw her. Now I love Yvonne — for I *do* love her, Lydia. She has come in these late years to take the place of the other. God, I am sure that sometimes I really see my wife's eyes — looking at me through Yvonne's — My wife's, did I say? Yes — my own wife's, Lydia, for after all — [*slowly*] — she was my own wife. It's the thing in Yvonne that brings Matilde back to me that causes me to love her to-day.

LYDIA. [*Looking hard at him, as he drops into silence.*] Have you told this story to your — your present wife? Does she know?

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BROOD. No one has heard this story from my lips but you. To-night I shall tell Yvonne. I have come to see only too plainly that she likes Frederic — she likes and spoils him because she feels that he is my son. She is puzzled by my evident dislike for the boy. She is beginning to misjudge me, to feel hard toward me. I *must* tell her. She must understand why I feel as I do. Listen! They have just come in. Ah! Do you hear that? Do you know what it is that he is whistling? [*Frederic is heard whistling in the distance the "Paloma" waltzes.*]

LYDIA. "La Paloma" waltz — his favorite. He has hummed or whistled it ever since I have known him.

BROOD. And always will. It was the waltz that his mother learned from his — his father. She — she played the harp. I can hear them playing now — ah! And now this boy is drumming it on the piano with Yvonne — with Yvonne! I hear them every day.

LYDIA. [*Rigidly.*] You will not tell him what you have told me?

BROOD. Not now. But when I am in my grave, he may have the pleasure of discovering his heritage in the will I shall leave behind. [*Laughs grimly.*] So, you see, I can't let you think of marrying him.

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LYDIA. [*Intensely.*] Mr. Brood, I have listened in horror to what you have said. I won't say that I can't understand how you feel. You can't help it. But you are unjust to the innocent. You have brought him up and fattened him as the butcher puts meat upon his calves and swine — to prepare them for death. Mr. Brood, if Frederic were to ask me to-night to be his wife, I'd say yes with every drop of my blood. What do I care who his mother was, or his father? That's nothing to me.

BROOD. [*Facing her — in surprise.*] It's too bad, after all, that he has n't got it in him to love you. If — if he loved you as you ought to be loved, Lydia, I might spare him. But he — he does not love you. [*Steadily.*] He is desperatly in love with another woman.

LYDIA. [*Looks down and closes her eyes as if in pain. As he turns toward the door quickly, she sits at the table and fumbles with the papers.*]

[*Enter from R., from downstairs, Mrs. Brood, in evening dress, without wrap, except a gauze neck shawl, smoking a cigarette; a deep red rose in her hair. She is followed closely by Frederic, in evening clothes, his face flushed and eager.*]

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MRS. BROOD. [*Gaily to Brood.*] Ah, here you are. [*Sees Lydia and notes her confusion, and flashes quick glances from the girl to her husband and back.*] And you, Miss Desmond. James, dear, you are working Miss Desmond too hard. It is very late. See, see how nervous she is. The poor child is trembling. For shame, James! [*Looks at him meaningly.*]

LYDIA. Oh, I assure you, Mrs. Brood, it is nothing. I — I am not tired. Like Mr. Brood, I am only eager to finish the work. [*Looks quickly at Frederic.*]

BROOD. We are getting on toward the end. We have just escaped captivity in Lhasa. It was a bit thrilling, I fancy. But we've stopped for the night.

MRS. BROOD. [*Insolently.*] So I perceive. You stopped, I daresay, just as soon as you heard the tread of the vulgar world approaching the inner temple. That's what you broke into and desecrated, was n't it? The inner temple?

BROOD. [*Coldly.*] You mean at Lhasa?

MRS. BROOD. Certainly. The place you were escaping from when we came in. [*Walks over to L., palpably angry. Lydia looks at Brood helplessly, and he frowns at his wife. Frederic, after hesitating a moment, goes to Mrs. Brood, who sits on couch.*]

FREDERIC. [*In low tone.*] Oh, I say, Yvonne, she'll think you're jealous. It was rather nasty.

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MRS. BROOD. [*Furiously, but in low tone.*] Jealous? Jealous of that lily-white thing? Poof! She has n't the blood of a turnip. Why should I be jealous? Poof!

FREDERIC. [*In low tones.*] You told me to-night that you did n't love him.

MRS. BROOD. [*In a panic-stricken voice.*] Stand there! Between! I can feel his eyes burning into my soul. Stand between us! I — I can't stand the look that's in his eyes. [*He moves over in a line and she looks relieved, nervously puffing at her cigarette.*] Jealous! Poof! I — I am only afraid of him.

LYDIA. [*Who has picked up some papers, and, after a glance at Frederic, starts quickly towards the door.*] Good-night, Mr. Brood.

BROOD. [*Starting.*] Wait, Lydia! One moment, please. [*Follows her up to the door, and, in expostulating, draws her to the center windows, where they talk earnestly during the open conversation down stage.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Looking over her shoulder, with an agitated laugh.*] Dear me, what a tempest in a temple!

FREDERIC. Lydia is too good for that sort of — of an insinuation.

MRS. BROOD. Insinuation? Rubbish!

FREDERIC. You might just as well have said —

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well, it's too rotten even for me to suggest. She's the truest, purest, best girl I've ever known, Yvonne.

MRS. BROOD. Then, why don't you go to her? Why do you hang over me? I'm not the purest and best you've ever known. Go to your lily-white and spotless Lydia. I'm not holding you, Frederic. Go! You irritate me!

FREDERIC. Say, by heaven, you do love him. I can see it — I can feel it in the air about you. You can't fool me. What, in heaven's name, are you trying to do with me? I don't give a damn if he does hear me. I love you. I adore you! And you've said that you love me — not as a boy, not as a son, but as a man.

MRS. BROOD. Sh! Be careful!

FREDERIC. After all you said to me in the motor car coming back to-night! After all we have planned and all I've agreed to do! In spite of all that, by God, you *do* love him. That's why you won't let me kiss you. That's why! You're just playing with me! You want him to hate me more than he does now. You love him and you're using me to make him jealous. I see! And, oh, you know how much I love you, Yvonne! I'm a dog, I know, but I can't help it.

MRS. BROOD. Be quiet! Not now. I'll see you

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here later. We must talk it all over. Listen! I *will* do what I said I would, Frederic. I have decided. Now, be quiet. Go away. They are coming back. Why does n't the little fool go home?

BROOD. [*Coming down sternly, followed by Lydia, who is plainly scared.*] You did n't mean all that you said a moment ago, Yvonne. Lydia has misinterpreted your idle words. You meant nothing unkind, I'm sure. [*Looking straight into her eyes. She looks back insolently for a second and then the sneer goes out of her face.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Meekly.*] No, — of course not. I — I am sorry if Miss Desmond thought anything else. [*Flaring up briefly.*] But why all this commotion about it? [*Catches his eye and falters.*] Oh, I say, can't we settle down here now for a few comfy minutes? We want to talk over the dinner.

BROOD. [*To Lydia.*] You see, she did not mean anything unkind. I told you so. Lydia is staying over night, my dear. We can't send her out in this blizzard. No one but policemen and burglars go out such nights as this.

MRS. BROOD. And diners-out, my dear. [*He sits beside her, as Frederic walks angrily over to where Ranjab is pouring out the drinks. Suddenly she draws Brood to her and kisses his lips passionately. Lydia*

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turns away quickly and Frederic, having seen, clenches his hands.] Don't mind me, Miss Desmond! I'm silly about him. Please sit down. I'm so glad James thought to ask you to stop over night. It's perfectly impossible outside, and Frederic sent the motor car away. Ooh! One can almost feel that ghosts from every graveyard in the world are whistling past our windows. Ranjab to the rescue! Ah, this is truly an instance of spirits come in, spirits go out. [*Ranjab is serving the hot drinks on a tray.*]

FREDERIC. If you'll excuse me, good people, I think I'll go to bed.

MRS. BROOD. [*Looks quickly at him.*] Bed is a sepulcher, Frederic. We bury half our lives in it. Come, be a sport, as Mr. Gunning would say.

FREDERIC. [*Surlily.*] You know I'm on the water-wagon.

MRS. BROOD. You are as solemn about it as if it were a hearse.

BROOD. You're in a peculiar mood to-night, Yvonne. Ghosts, and graves, and hearses. I'm afraid we sha'n't sleep well if you put such things into our heads. See, Lydia would jump now if I said "boo."

LYDIA. [*Nervously, smiling.*] It's the storm. I

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am always nervous when the wind blows like this.
[*Sits at the right of the table.*]

FREDERIC. I feel creepy up here, myself.

BROOD. I thought you were going to bed.

FREDERIC. [*Resentfully.*] I've changed my mind.
Of course, if you want to *send* me to bed, I'll go.
I'm a dutiful son.

BROOD. On the contrary, I want you to sit up and tell us all that happened at the dinner after I left. What spiteful things were said about me?

FREDERIC. They were particularly careful not to say them in my hearing.

MRS. BROOD. I heard some very nice things about you. Mrs. Ratcliff said that you interest her more than any man she's ever known. You are so delightfully mysterious and so tragic in your silences. Being silent while she talks is truly tragic. I don't wonder that you interest her. Mr. Ratcliff then said he'd rather go shooting with you than any man he knows.

BROOD. I suppose that's also because I'm silent.

FREDERIC. He says you're the deadliest shot he knows.

MRS. BROOD. What was said about your wonderful ability with the revolver? Hitting quarters at thirty paces, was n't it? How interesting to have a

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husband who can even see a quarter that far away. But, dear me, what can one expect to shoot at with a revolver?

BROOD. Nothing much, except mad dogs and men.

LYDIA. [*Wide-eyed.*] I wonder if you've —

BROOD. [*Intercepting.*] No, I've never shot a mad dog. But I've heard enough about myself. What else is there to gossip about? How did you like the new Mrs. Harding — the bride?

MRS. BROOD. She's very stupid. She says she doesn't know how many cocktails her husband can drink. I've known him less than half an hour and I can tell her that much. He can drink a little over two. Three make him very tight. I say, Freddie, didn't you — please wake up, Freddie — didn't you think Maisie Gunning was perfectly wonderful to-night?

FREDERIC. Oh, was she?

MRS. BROOD. She never was so irresistible. There was n't anything to hold it on but just these little straps up here. Poor Dr. Hodder sat next to her, you remember, James. He told me after dinner that he could n't remember a word she said to him.

BROOD. Psychological.

LYDIA. How funny! I think Mrs. Gunning is very bright.

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BROOD. I suppose you brought Hodder down with you in the machine. I told him you would drop him at his rooms. He's just across the street from us now, Lydia. Likes the neighborhood.

MRS. BROOD. [*Glancing at Frederic.*] Who was the young woman with the lisp, Frederic?

FREDERIC. [*Quickly.*] Miss Dangerfield. She's a clever little thing. Comes from Virginia. Did you talk at all with her? Delicious voice and —

BROOD. [*Breaking in.*] By the way, *did* you bring Dr. Hodder down with you?

FREDERIC. [*Lamely.*] I did n't think he was ready to come when we left.

BROOD. Then, you did n't bring him. That's what I asked. I told you to do it, Frederic. It's a wretched night for him to take his horses out. I remember that he said he'd like to get home by ten or thereabouts. He has work to do in his laboratory. Did you ask him if he was ready to come away?

MRS. BROOD. Oh, he could get home all right, James. Besides, I feel as though I am in riding an ambulance when I'm with him. Don't bother. He's home long ago.

BROOD. [*Quietly.*] Of course, if you preferred to come down alone all well and good. But you'll go

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over in the morning, Frederic, and tell him you're sorry to have come off without him.

FREDERIC. [*Flaring.*] I'm not a child any longer, father. I may just as well tell you that I did n't ask him because he bores me and I did n't want him. And so I am not going over to him in the morning with any polite lies, either.

BROOD. [*Looks at him steadily.*] We won't discuss that to-night. To-morrow will be time enough.

LYDIA. [*Agitated, in an aside to Brood.*] Please, please, Mr. Brood, for my sake.

MRS. BROOD. [*With her chin in her hand, steadily watching the two men.*] I think Dr. Hodder much preferred coming down with the Gunnings. As a matter of fact, James, he left with them just ahead of us. I was very much annoyed. He had promised to come down with me. I don't like a man who ignores me. He was very rude.

BROOD. Then, of course, there is no necessity for Frederic to beg his pardon.

FREDERIC. I still say that I would n't have asked him. I did n't know he had gone with the Gunnings, Yvonne. So don't try to excuse me in that way.

BROOD. We will drop the subject.

FREDERIC. [*Striding forward.*] Look here, father, I've got to have a talk with you sooner or later.

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I've got one or two things to tell you before I go to bed to-night. The time's come. You've just got to listen to me. [*The two women start up and stare at him, Yvonne anxiously and Lydia in alarm.*]

BROOD. What do you mean, sir?

FREDERIC. [*Glances at Yvonne.*] This is n't the place to talk.

MRS. BROOD. [*Arising.*] Shall we leave you alone?

BROOD. No! If there's anything to be said, let him say it here, before all of us. As near as I can judge, we have quite an equal claim to his revelations. What is it, sir?

FREDERIC. I'd rather not — here. We'd better have it out — alone.

BROOD. Have it out?

FREDERIC. Yes. I'm going to be treated as a son from this day on or — or I'll know the reason why. [*Goes to door L.*] Will you come to the picture gallery? [*Looks at his watch.*] It's a quarter to eleven. I'll not keep you long.

LYDIA. [*Looking from one to the other in distress.*] Don't be rash, Frederic — don't be imprudent. Remember he is your — your father.

BROOD. [*After hesitating a moment, goes up after him.*] Permit me to say that I'll not keep you long. [*To the ladies.*] Will you wait here for the result of

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our deliberations? [*Comes back to table and rings gong. Ranjab appears at R.*] Ranjab, will you see to it that the house is thoroughly locked? This is a glorious night for thieves and house-breakers. The servants downstairs are getting careless. Have the garden gates securely bolted. [*To Mrs. Brood.*] I have a strange feeling that an attempt will be made to rob me to-night. But don't be nervous. We'll soon sleep it off. Now, Frederic.

[*Exit Frederic and Brood, L. U. E.*]

[*Mrs. Brood sits stark and silent, looking straight ahead of her. Lydia has her hand on her throat, watching the two men down the hall. Ranjab pulls the window curtains close and banks the fire, and then, looking down the hall, departs at R. All the time there has been no change in the position of the two women.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Aside — speaking to herself.*] I wonder if he is going to fail me? Is he finding his courage in one way, only to lose it in another? [*Glenches her hands and arises to pace up stage. Seeing Lydia, she stops short.*]

LYDIA. [*Coming down.*] You'd — you'd better stop them, Mrs. Brood. I can't tell you why — but it's necessary — most necessary.

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MRS. BROOD. [*Coldly.*] I thought you had gone. No, don't go! I want to ask you why you are so interested — why you are so nervous and unstrung? They can take care of themselves. And I am reminded that you were very much upset when we came in a little while ago. [*Insolently.*] May I ask, Miss Desmond, if it is Mr. Brood you are in love with or his son?

LYDIA. [*With dignity.*] I might, with some reason, repeat that question to you, Mrs. Brood.

MRS. BROOD. Well, I could answer it very plainly — if I chose.

LYDIA. I don't mean you to answer it. Good-night.

MRS. BROOD. One moment, please. You were talking of Frederic and me when we came in. What were you saying? What was my husband saying?

LYDIA. We were not discussing you and Frederic.

MRS. BROOD. I don't believe you, Miss Desmond. You were talking of us. I am not so blind as to think you are in love with my husband. It is Frederic. You are like a sick cat over him. My husband would not love you — he could not. I am the kind of woman he can love — no other. He is a man — he is not a plaything for children. So you *were* talking about us. He was telling you something. You were

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filling him with vile suspicions because you are jealous. You were —

LYDIA. Stop! You don't know what you are saying. I cannot answer for your husband, but for myself, I am not blind to what is going on. You are absolutely wrecking that poor boy's life. Oh, it's the most diabolical thing the world has ever known! What is your purpose? What do you gain? You have sapped his senses, his honor, his very heart — you leave him but the shell of his former self — and all for what? God alone knows! Oh, you are a vile woman!

MRS. BROOD. [*Suddenly cringes, after appearing indignant for a moment.*] No, no! I am not! You — you don't understand — [*suddenly catches herself and resumes her former manner*]. What am I saying? Why, one might think I — Oh, so I am a vile woman, eh? Because I inspire jealousy in you? Because you have begun to see that Frederic does not care for you? Because your baby-blue eyes are opened, eh? That makes me vile, eh? Well, Miss Desmond, it may satisfy you to know that you are quite welcome to Frederic's love — if you can get it.

LYDIA. Down in his heart, he loves me, Mrs. Brood. I know it. He is under a spell. Oh, I know! I can see it in his eyes when he gets you out of his

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mind for a moment. The wife of his father! God should strike you dead!

MRS. BROOD. [*Laughs coolly.*] He will — when I have served my time, Miss Desmond. And there 's time enough for that. Don't let us waste any more of yours. Shall I see you in the morning?

LYDIA. No, Mrs. Brood. When I go from this house to-morrow — God knows I 'd go to-night if — if I could — [*involuntarily glancing off L.*] — when I go to-morrow, it will be with the resolve never to enter it again so long as you are here as mistress.

MRS. BROOD. How odd, Miss Desmond. I was just about to suggest it myself.

LYDIA. [*After a pause, studying Mrs. Brood closely.*] I wonder how it will all end for you, Mrs. Brood. I wonder. [*Suddenly kind.*] I — I don't believe you comprehend.

MRS. BROOD. [*With a smile.*] You mean, you don't believe that I am as bad as I think I am?

LYDIA. I — I don't know just what I mean. Good-night.

MRS. BROOD. [*Now standing beside the Buddha, Lydia having stopped near the door R., to look off L. — In wonder, speaking to the Buddha.*] Shall I go on with it? Shall I go on with it?

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[Enter Brood L., quietly. Comes down with a hard smile.]

BROOD. Going to bed, Lydia? Well, good night. We'll get at it again in the morning. By Jove, how the wind howls. [*Goes up and opens window; a gust of wind and snow blows in.*] I can scarcely see the light in your window down there, Yvonne. But I think it's drifting now — sweeping down from the roof. Anyway, it's fresh air. [*Closes the window as both women shudder from the chill.*]

LYDIA. I shall not be here in the morning, Mr. Brood.

BROOD. [*Looks from one to the other.*] Very well. I am sorry. Good night.

[*Lydia looks off L. and then exits. Brood goes to door R.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Tense and as if in suspense, standing at left of table, afraid to look at him. Solil.*] I wonder what they have said to each other? Has everything been undone? Am I found out already? [*Impulsively she strides up to door L., as if to rush to Frederic, but stops suddenly and then comes down stage as Brood does, his eyes having stopped her.*]

BROOD. [*While she waits for him to speak, he turns to the idol and bows his head.*] I would, graven friend

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of my solitudes, that you and I had never come out of the land of unsolvable mysteries.

MRS. BROOD. [*After a long silence, shrilly.*] Well?

BROOD. [*Starts and turns to her.*] Yvonne, I have hurt that boy beyond all chance of recovery.

MRS. BROOD. [*In a low, horrified tone.*] Hurt him? [*Comprehending.*] Is he dying out there?

BROOD. I have hurt him with words. Yes, I have no doubt he is dying, but not out there. He will be a long time dying. But he has his own hand at his throat even now. It is only a question of time. He won't live — he won't care to live.

MRS. BROOD. [*Shrilly.*] What have you done? You wretch, what have you done?

BROOD. [*As if dazed.*] I have killed his soul.

MRS. BROOD. [*Glaring at him across the table.*] You could do it. You have no soul of your own.

BROOD. [*Turning toward her.*] That is why *we* are such friends. [*Touching the idol with his hand.*]

MRS. BROOD. That poor, poor boy! Oh, God, James, what have you done to him?

BROOD. If I have killed his soul, Yvonne, it was done in time to keep you from damning it.

MRS. BROOD. I see. What has he said to you about me?

BROOD. You have had your fears for nothing, my

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dear. He did not mention your name, nor did he refer to you in any way whatsoever.

MRS. BROOD. [*Triumphantly.*] Ah!

BROOD. Yvonne, you have just called me a wretch. You judge me without a hearing. Suppose that I were to confess to you that I left him out there with a blasted look in his eyes — that I left him because I was sorry for what I had done, and I could not stand by and look at the wreck I had made.

MRS. BROOD. But what of him? What is it to me that you are sorry now? What I want to know is this: what have you done to that unhappy boy?

BROOD. He'll tell you soon enough in his own words. Then you will despise me even more than I despise myself. He looked at me with his mother's eyes when I struck that blow to the heart. Her eyes that were always pleading — but, damn them! — always lying to me! God, for a moment I faltered. There was a wave of love — yes, love, not pity — that came over me as I looked at him. It was as though I had hurt a thing that I loved. Then it passed. He is not a thing for me to love. Sometimes I have wondered — sometimes I have felt a queer gripping of the heart even when I was harshest toward him. I can't account for that. Sometimes

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his eyes have melted the steel that was driven into my heart long ago, and again his voice and the touch of his hand checked my bitterest impulses. Are you listening, Yvonne?

MRS. BROOD. [*Her eyes glittering with eagerness.*] Yes.

BROOD. [*Sitting at right of table and leaning forward.*] You ask what I have done to him. It is as nothing in comparison to what he would have done to me. It is n't necessary to explain. I have known it quite as long as you, Yvonne. Again I say, it's the heart of his mother that drives that boy's blood along its craven way. Yvonne, she was an evil woman — as evil as God ever put life into.

MRS. BROOD. [*Hoarsely.*] Go on! [*She sits opposite him.*]

BROOD. I loved her as no woman ever was loved before or since. I thought she loved me — God, I believed she did. But I was not the man. There was another. She loved him. I've never told this to you. You may have guessed, as others have guessed, but — but she betrayed me. She killed the thing that was best in her, that was best in me. Her lover was that boy's father.

MRS. BROOD. [*Her hands clenched unseen, under the table.*] I am reminded of a translation from the French.

BROOD. Do not scoff! That was years ago. To-

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night I intended to tell this to you — to let you understand, once for all, why there is no tenderness in my soul for that — that son of hers. I did not mean to tell Frederic — now.

MRS. BROOD. [*Shrinking.*] But — but you *have* told him?

BROOD. He stood before me out there and prayed to God that he might awake to find that he was not my son.

MRS. BROOD. You told him then?

BROOD. He cursed me for having driven his mother out of my house.

MRS. BROOD. You told him?

BROOD. He uttered the wish that she might come back from the grave to curse me for not being a good father to her child.

MRS. BROOD. You told him then?

BROOD. He said that his mother must have loathed me as no human being was ever — God! — was ever loathed before! *Then* I told him!

MRS. BROOD. Because she *did* loathe you?

BROOD. Yvonne! By God, you are laughing?

MRS. BROOD. I am merely wondering whether there was enough left to hurt him after so much of the poison had been used on you. And, then, James, what did he say?

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BROOD. By heaven, I — I can't understand your mood. What do you mean? Is it so trifling after all?

MRS. BROOD. [*Steadily.*] I only know that after he had said all those things to you, and you had told him he was a bastard, that *you* — you, not he — was sorry.

BROOD. It may satisfy you to know that I did not expect sympathy from you.

MRS. BROOD. Why *should* the strong expect sympathy from the weak?

BROOD. I love you, Yvonne.

MRS. BROOD. We all have our little weaknesses.

BROOD. [*Studying her face.*] Do you love Frederic?

MRS. BROOD. You forget that I have looked upon him as your son.

BROOD. I'll not pursue the point.

MRS. BROOD. It is n't necessary, James. I can read your thoughts. If you had not thought that of me, you would have spared Frederic the blow you have just given him. Now, hear what I have to say: I am glad that he was able to strike first, to goad you out of your maddening self-esteem. You should not forget, James Brood, that the worm always turns. You have cherished the conviction that Frederic would always submit to the indignities you heap

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upon him. It has not entered that too solid head of yours that he is a full-grown man and that he has never seen anything in you to love. Why should he not treat you as a stranger? You have treated him as one — or even worse, for you would be gracious to a stranger. He has found the courage to turn upon you. He has routed you from your smug and complacent supremacy, and you squirm for the first time since I have known you. I'm as proud of him as I am sorry for him.

BROOD. [*Coldly.*] It is worthy of note, Yvonne, that you and he should have discovered a vent for your opinions in almost the same breath.

MRS. BROOD. You may attribute the coincidence to the fact that this is an age of discovery. Henceforth you may believe that there is nothing quite new, even under your sun. [*Suddenly serious.*] James, you are the only coward in our little family.

BROOD. Coward!

MRS. BROOD. Yes. You have struck a man who was asleep, absolutely asleep.

BROOD. [*Slowly.*] Yes. I did. And I never came so near to loving him as I do now.

MRS. BROOD. [*Leaning forward intently.*] Do you *know* that he is not your son? Do you *know* it?

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BROOD. Quite as well as I know that I am not his father.

MRS. BROOD. Are you sure — have you always been sure — that his — his mother was the kind of woman you say she was? Have you never felt that you were wrong?

BROOD. Am I to listen to nothing but indictments?

MRS. BROOD. She was first in your love. You knew and loved her twenty years and more before you saw me, and she has never been out of your mind since the day you took her as your wife. I *know* this. Wait! I am not saying, James Brood, that you do not love me — or have not loved me — I might say. You could n't help it! You could n't help loving me. And in all this time that you have loved me, there has not been an instant in which you have not, down in your heart, caressed the memory of that other woman. You have held me in your arms and permitted, even encouraged, your imagination to substitute another woman's never-to-be-forgotten kisses for mine. You have kissed Matilde all these months, not me. Matilde is dead, but to you she is still alive.

BROOD. [*Deeply agitated.*] Good God! What manner of woman are you?

MRS. BROOD. Ah, I am right, am I not?

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BROOD. Why — why, I have n't dared admit that to myself. How should you even guess at such —

MRS. BROOD. All the witches are not riding broomsticks and sweeping cobwebs, my husband. You wonder why I tell you this and yet submit to the incongruous conditions. Well, in the first place, I can't help what is; in the second place, I want nothing better than to be loved as Matilde was loved. I am willing to have the love that belonged to her; that is the only love you will ever be able to give. There never has been any other love in you. And now, since I am defending her son, I may as well speak one single sentence in her defense. I don't believe she was anything but a true and loving wife — and cruelly misunderstood.

BROOD. By heaven, Yvonne, I can't listen to this! You —

MRS. BROOD. Let me ask you a single question: what did Frederic say to you when you told him that his mother was a bad woman?

BROOD. [*Confusedly.*] He — he said I was a liar — a cur!

MRS. BROOD. And that was when you began to feel that you loved him. Ah, I can see it in your eyes. Yes, James Brood, you are a big man. You are the most wonderful man I have ever known.

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You *have* a heart, James Brood — a heart that still needs breaking before you will see that it's there.

BROOD. My God, if my heart has n't been broken!

MRS. BROOD. Your head has been hurt, my good friend, and there's a vast difference. I don't believe that she was ever in love with the music master.

BROOD. [*Startled — and intensely.*] How did you know there was a music master?

MRS. BROOD. [*Momentarily dismayed.*] How do I know a great many things?

BROOD. That is n't answering my question. Not until to-night have I ever mentioned the existence of the — the music master. Damn him! How do you come to know of him, Yvonne? Were you eavesdropping while Lydia and I were talking to-night?

MRS. BROOD. Eavesdropping? You know better than that. I do not stoop to that, sir. The music master? How do I know about him? Is he not there in your head all the time? Is he not as much of a personality as Matilde, even now? Well, then! Now, I have something more for you. Listen: can you not recognize the familiar strain of music as I tap it off with my fingers? [*She taps on table top, with fingers' ends, the rhythmic time of "La Paloma," watching his petrified face with a curious smile on her lips.*]

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BROOD. [*Glaring at her in amazement and dread.*] Great God, Yvonne!

MRS. BROOD. *That* always comes into your head when music is pronounced. It is the one air you know. [*Hums the waltz and taps at the same time.*] You followed me?

BROOD. In God's name, woman, how do you do this? What witchcraft is this?

MRS. BROOD. Ranjab performs wonders with his hands. I, too, have clever fingers, eh? He is no greater magician than I.

BROOD. [*Standing and regarding her savagely.*] You will have to explain this to me. I demand it of you.

MRS. BROOD. There is nothing to explain. I read you as I would a book. That is all. It is very simple. I have not read you for a year to no purpose. [*Suddenly earnest.*] Are you not sorry that you have hurt that boy? Are you not sorry now that you hurt her those long years ago? Are you not sorry to-night that she is dead?

BROOD. [*Furiously.*] No! If she were here to-night I should drive her out into the world as I did twenty years ago — only if I had it to do over again I would not rear her child to man's estate. I would kill him with my own hands the day he was born if I had it to do over again. Now, you understand how I feel about

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it? And, listen to me! Once for all, that boy steps out of your life as completely to-night as he steps out of mine. Do you understand? It is not a question of choosing between us. I have chosen for you. You will not see him after to-night. This time I am going to *keep* my wife.

MRS. BROOD. [*Looking down; in sullen, low tones.*] I am quite sure that you will not have the opportunity to drive me out into the street. [*Arising quickly.*] And, now, James, I am going to see Frederic.

BROOD. I don't think that is necessary.

MRS. BROOD. I am going to see him!

BROOD [*Sarcastically.*] Please remain where you are. He will come to you — as soon as I have gone. Perhaps it is better that I leave you alone to say good-by to him. I have already said it to him. Kindly stop in my room on your way to bed. There is still something I would say to you.

[*Exit Brood R.*]

[*Mrs. Brood's sullen gaze follows him through the door. Then she quickly goes over and listens at the door R., afterwards looking off L. intently. She comes down C. to right of table with a perplexed frown on her face. She stands there thinking, working her fingers spasmodically.*]

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MRS. BROOD. [*Suddenly letting her gaze rest upon the idol at her side, speaking slowly, after smiling vaguely upon the object.*] Well, my chatterbox friend, I got through the crust, did n't I? [*Very erect and triumphant, her hands behind her back.*] I pierced his armor. He'll tell you all about how it felt, never fear. He'll creep up here and ask you to tell him what to do about it. He's very busy guessing about it now. Your confidential friend, my husband, has had his wits tangled at last. And when he comes here to spout his secret doubts into your dainty ear, just you look wise and mysterious, because I'm going to whisper a secret to you, and it is not to go any farther, do you mind? Listen! [*She puts her lips to the idol's ear and whispers.*] So! Now you know. I've told it to you before. And it is no secret that James Brood is wondering at this very moment just what his beautiful Yvonne will do next! [*Reflectively, an angry look in her eyes.*] Well, he'll know before long. [*Turns to look at door L.*]

[*A moment later Frederic enters from door at L. There is a haggard, serious look in his face, but otherwise he is erect and defiant. She stands with her hands behind her, looking at him. He stops up stage and returns her look.*]

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MRS. BROOD. [*After a short silence.*] I am glad to see that you take it like a man.

FREDERIC. It does n't make any difference between you and me, then?

MRS. BROOD. Come here, Frederic. We are quite alone. He has gone to bed. [*Frederic hastens down to her side. She puts her hand upon his shoulder and holds him away.*] There is nothing left for you to do but leave this house.

FREDERIC. Leave it! By heaven, Yvonne, it was n't necessary for him to order me to go. Why — why, I would n't have stayed after — after, well, you know — not if it were to save his life a hundred times over.

MRS. BROOD. You are to go to-morrow.

FREDERIC. No, I am going to-night.

MRS. BROOD. To-night? No, no! Not so soon. Frederic, you are forgetting me.

[*Enter Ranjab quietly, unobserved R. He starts in surprise. He listens for a few minutes before lifting his hands as if in execration, and cautiously tiptoes off R.*]

FREDERIC. You mean that you — you want me to stay? I can't believe that.

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MRS. BROOD. No! You can't stay here. I want you to go. But, Frederic, I am going with you.

FREDERIC. Yvonne!

MRS. BROOD. Yes! Stop! You must not do that. We are still under my husband's roof.

FREDERIC. But you don't love him! I thought you did to-night. I thought you'd been playing with me. You made me feel ashamed in spite of myself. Now that I — that he does not consider me to be his son, I am no longer afraid. I glory in my power to take you from him. What joy it will be to do this thing to him. By God, I'll make him sorry for what he said to me out there!

MRS. BROOD. Sh! Not so loud. This is no place to talk it over. We may be heard. Don't speak, please, and don't be foolish. I intend to go away with you. To-morrow early you will engage passage on the first good boat to Cherbourg. I have thought it all out. You will take passage for yourself and sister — no, no! Sister, do you hear? I mean that, Frederic. You have still to prove your love for me before you can hope to win all there is of mine. I will go away from here with you. That is the beginning.

FREDERIC. [*Joyously.*] Yes, yes! To-morrow I'll take passage on — on —

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MRS. BROOD. The fastest ship. Now, listen to me. I have in my jewel safe money amounting to ten thousand dollars. It is my own money. You have no money of your own. He has kept yours from you and you have not yet earned enough at your profession. Poor boy! Well, you must take some of this, that I have stored away. You must take all of my jewels — and you must get them away from here to-night. For the fastest boat sails at noon to-morrow. Do you know that? The fastest boat sails at noon to-morrow!

FREDERIC. [*Stunned.*] You — you really are going to leave him? God, I — I can't believe it!

MRS. BROOD. Don't you want me to go?

FREDERIC. [*Confused.*] I — yes, yes! Of course, I do. I — I was only thinking —

MRS. BROOD. Thinking of Lydia! You are wondering what she will think of you. Very well. Go alone!

FREDERIC. It's not only Lydia. Of course, I'd rather that she did not think evil of me — Oh, but what's the odds! What am I to talk like this? I'm — nobody. Yes, you are to go with me. To-morrow we'll sail. By my soul, I'll smash him — I'll smash him!

MRS. BROOD. [*Keenly.*] You're rather half-

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hearted about it, I see. Not so eager as you have professed to be for a week. Is my so-called spell wearing off?

FREDERIC. Yvonne, I'll be perfectly frank with you. My fath — he crushed all the romance out of my heart out there a little while ago. I don't care to live now except to prove to myself that I am a man. The glitter is gone. It fell away as I sat out there alone and fought down the impulse to go down and put a bullet in my brain. Things are not what they were an hour ago. I am not the same man.

MRS. BROOD. No. The world will know to-morrow that you are not his son.

FREDERIC. What do you mean? He can't acknowledge *that* to the world.

MRS. BROOD. He has already told Miss Desmond — and she — she has turned against you. He will tell others.

FREDERIC. He has told Lydia?

MRS. BROOD. Before he told either you or me. Oh, he damned your mother long before he damned you. He's a practised artist at it, my dear. He commanded me not to see you again. He said he would beat me if I did. Just as he said he had beaten your mother, years ago.

FREDERIC. No, Yvonne — he swore that he wor-

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shipped her. I—I don't believe he did that. He lied to frighten you.

MRS. BROOD. So be it. I know not. You are a wise young man. You know more now than you knew yesterday. I submit to your supreme reason. [*Suddenly clutches his coat sleeve and brings her face close to his.*] Enough of this. Do you love me? Do you want to leave me here with him? Speak, once for all. I am ready to go away with you.

FREDERIC. Yes! I cannot go without you! Tell me what to do! Tell me! You are cool and clever. I am upset—I can't think. Tell me, Yvonne. Thank God, I am not your step-son! It lifts something off my conscience that has weighed like a ton of stone. I'm not the dog I might have been.

MRS. BROOD. I'll give you such love as you have never dreamed of. I'll take you to Hungary—to your mother's people—to the place where she died. Estates are waiting for you there. You need never want for anything—but I want you to work and be a man. I want the world to be proud of you—and I want him to regret more than ever the thing he has done. It is late. We must not stay here any longer. See if there is a light in his room. [*Frederic goes quickly to the windows and pulls the curtains aside, peering downward and off L. The snow is no longer*

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flying, and there is a glow of moonlight over everything, streaming in upon him.]

FREDERIC. Yes. No — it has just been extinguished. He is in bed. I see the light still in your room, Yvonne — just beyond his. It has stopped snowing and — yes, the moon is shining. [*Comes down eagerly and clasps her hands.*] I — I am mad with excitement. What — what am I to do?

MRS. BROOD. I shall go to my room at once and get the money and the jewels together. You must get them away with you to-night. No one shall ever know. They are mine — so do not have the fear that I would make a thief of you. No, you are not stealing me, my dear. I — I am stealing you — I am! Come to my room in half an hour and I will give you the packages. Then go to a hotel — first taking such belongings of your own that you may want. Remember you are leaving this house forever. No one can stop you if you go out with your bags and belongings. Come quietly to my room — we can talk over the plans there. It is not safe here.

FREDERIC. But how am I to get to your boudoir without disturbing him? I can't go through his room.

MRS. BROOD. [*Exasperated.*] I forgot! You cannot! [*Goes quickly up stage to the window, motioning*

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to him. *He follows. Then with her finger to her lips she leads him down C.*] You can come up over the balcony to my window. I will let you in.

FREDERIC. Climb up the vines, you mean? Gad, Yvonne, that's risky. Suppose —

MRS. BROOD. What a pretty hero! Are you afraid? You have begged me to let you climb up before now. Why are you so soon a coward?

FREDERIC. I can do it — of course. I'm only thinking of you.

MRS. BROOD. It is dark down there in the court and the wind is blowing. You can't be seen or heard.

[At this juncture Ranjab steps inside the door R., and cautiously beckons to Brood outside. As he steps out Brood glides in, and stands glaring at the couple down stage, unseen himself. Ranjab holds a curtain aside near the door and Brood steps behind it, being screened from view.]

FREDERIC. Oh, this will be revenge! This will pay for everything!

MRS. BROOD. In half an hour it will be safe enough. I will have everything ready. Come up over the balcony. You are strong. You can climb those great vines as a cat would climb.

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FREDERIC. You — you really love me enough for this?

MRS. BROOD. Time alone will prove that to you, Frederic.

FREDERIC. In half an hour! I'll be there. I've climbed those vines ever since I was a little boy. I climbed them like a cat and I was trying to catch the birds. After all these years, I shall at last succeed in catching one.

MRS. BROOD. Let me go, now. But, Frederic, be sure! Be careful! Nothing must go wrong now. *[She tears her hands from his and hurries up to door R. There she hesitates, directly in front of the place where Brood is hiding.]* I am not sure that he is asleep. *[Laughs softly.]* He has much to think of to-night.

[Exit quickly.]

[Frederic goes up and looks out of the window towards L., then comes down to the cupboard and takes a big drink of brandy, after which he goes up to R. and looks off through the door before going downstairs. Exit Frederic.]

[A moment later Brood steps from behind the curtain and stands before the door like a statue. He comes slowly down stage, passing his hand over his eyes doubtingly, apparently convincing

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himself that the couple really had stood before him on a certain spot, Business, ad lib. It suddenly dawns upon him that he is being betrayed. A single bitter groan falls from his lips and his head droops, his fingers clenched. After a moment he pulls himself together and turns to the idol.]

BROOD. [*Slowly.*] Ten minutes ago I was cursing myself for being cruel to him. Ten minutes ago down in my heart I was loving him. It was not pity, it was love. He took it like a man — not like a cur. And I saw my own features in his face — I heard something like my own tone in his voice. God, how I was deceiving myself! [*Goes up and looks off L. through window. Then comes down and takes up striker to ring gong, but reconsiders and steps towards the door R. As he does so, Ranjab enters. They face each other for a moment in silence.*]

RANJAB. Master, I have handled the deadly cobra in my own land. I have held it to my breast and it has not struck me. I have played with deadly serpents as children play with toys. Ranjab can tell the feel of a serpent that will sting. Does the master know what Ranjab did in the old days to the serpent that would sting?

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BROOD. Ranjab, are the doors securely locked?
Are the gates of the garden bolted?

RANJAB. Yes, master.

BROOD. Only the most audacious and daring burglar could force his way into the house?

RANJAB. Yes, master.

BROOD. It is a splendid night for thieves, Ranjab.
They are abroad. You may go. Good-night.

[Exit Ranjab L.]

[Brood quietly watches him off and then calmly lights a cigar at the table. After this he opens a drawer and takes therefrom a long revolver, the chambers of which he examines. Then he turns down the lights and goes up to the window, drawing aside the curtain in the window which opens toward the left. He unlatches the window and throws it open. Then, folding his arms, he stands there with the pistol in his hand, waiting, the moonlight streaming in upon him.]

CURTAIN

[End of Act II.]

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ACT THIRD

Scene: Same as Act II., twenty minutes later. Lights still low. Brood discovered standing in the window, staring down into the courtyard. After the picture has been held for some moments, he slowly and deliberately levels the revolver, taking careful aim. Then he fires one shot through the window. An instant later a hoarse cry of agony comes up from below, a wail that is cut off short by the fall to the ground. Brood lowers the pistol and peers out over the window ledge. As he walks quickly toward the table, a muffled shriek comes up through the hall and then a window is slammed shut far below. He has left the window open through which he fired the shot, and the curtains are blowing. At the table he grasps the stick and pounds vigorously upon the gong. Then he stands like a graven image awaiting the approach of Ranjab.

Enter Ranjab quickly at R. He glances first at the open window and then glides down to his master's side.

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BROOD. Telephone for the police! I have shot a burglar. Arouse the servants. Call Mr. Frederic.

RANJAB. [*His teeth showing in a fierce smile.*] Master! Out there?

BROOD. Yes! In the garden. He was climbing up the vines. I shot him. Go!

[*Exit Ranjab quickly R., glancing at the window as he goes.*]

[*Brood turns up the lights in the lamps and then takes his stand before the idol and speaks slowly, with deadly calmness.*]

BROOD. They said I was the best pistol shot in India ten years ago. I could hit a shilling at thirty paces. [*Levels pistol.*] My hand is still as steady as iron. [*Doors are heard slamming downstairs and voices come up from the courtyard.*]

A MAN'S VOICE. [*Outside.*] What's happened? Who fired that shot?

ANOTHER VOICE. Good God, there's — there's a man lying down there in the snow.

[*A door slams heavily far below.*]

[*Brood sits down heavily at the table, his eyes glued to the door R. Unconsciously he begins to*

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drum on the table with his fingers and then hums aloud the opening strains of "La Paloma."]

[Enter Mrs. Brood, door R., extremely agitated, her eyes wide with terror and despair. She is attired in a loose oriental dressing-gown of vivid colors. Just inside the door she pauses for a second, and then slowly advances toward him, stopping to give a comprehensive glance at the open window. As she draws near, he arises and she sees the revolver in his hand, whereupon she shrinks away in sudden terror, slowly moving back as if fascinated. He coolly chucks the revolver into the open drawer and folds his arms. She suddenly turns to the window and peers over the ledge, drawing back a time or two, and then staring wildly below. He looks out over the footlights.]

MRS. BROOD. *[Shrilly.]* They are carrying him into the house. Ranjab has recognized him — yes, and the others! The women are crying. God, why do they let his head hang down like that? *[Puts her hands over her eyes and then, collecting her nerves, she comes swiftly down and clutches his arm.]* Do you know what you have done?

BROOD. *[Quietly.]* I have shot a thief.

MRS. BROOD. You have killed Frederic Brood.

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BROOD. They said I could hit a shilling at thirty paces. I have shot a thief.

MRS. BROOD. You — you knew it was Frederic!

BROOD. [*Looking calmly into her eyes.*] You are right! I *did* know. I have shot a thief.

MRS. BROOD. [*Stares at him in horror.*] You shot him because of me?

BROOD. I shot a man who was breaking into my house at midnight. Ranjab has telephoned for the police. Go to bed, Yvonne. There is nothing for you to do — at present.

MRS. BROOD. Nothing for me to do? There is! The police must not come here. They must be stopped. God in heaven, I — I did not mean that it should come to this.

BROOD. To-morrow you will be free to explain to the police. For to-morrow you will go out from this house as one other woman went, a score of years ago. Save your strength for that. You will need it.

MRS. BROOD. Let me explain — let me tell you the —

BROOD. There is nothing to explain. I know everything. You devil! Now I see why I loved you so! You are like her in every respect — to the very core of your heart!

MRS. BROOD. [*Wringing her hands.*] They are

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coming here! Listen! Some one is coming up the stairs! Wha — what are you going to say to them when they tell you that you have slain your own son?

BROOD. That they lie!

MRS. BROOD. Oh, oh, it was an accident! You did n't know!

BROOD. Yes, a horrid, unbelievable accident. Trust me, my dear, to be properly shocked and overcome.

[*Enter Ranjab R., quite imperturbably.*]

RANJAB. A most dreadful thing has happened, master. I know not how to tell you.

BROOD. You don't mean, Ranjab, that the fel — fellow has escaped?

RANJAB. No, master. [*Looking straight at Mrs. Brood.*] I have to report a grave misfortune, sir. You have shot the wrong person.

MRS. BROOD. [*Straightening at the implication.*] Speak plainly.

BROOD. I was very careful of my aim, Ranjab. What do you mean?

RANJAB. It is hard to tell you, master. Through some strange fatality you have shot Mr. Frederic.

MRS. BROOD. [*To Brood, with scorn.*] There you have it! Now rave and tear your hair.

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BROOD. [*Quietly.*] I think we three understand each other. Ranjab, you told me that Mr. Frederic was in bed.

RANJAB. Yes, master. But you forget his extraordinary habit of walking in his sleep.

BROOD. He retired an hour or more ago. Did he not, Yvonne? You remember that he retired a few minutes after your return from the Ratcliffs'.

MRS. BROOD. [*Cringing.*] Yes, yes! An hour ago. Will—will the police ask—ask all of those questions?

BROOD. You have telephoned for the police, Ranjab?

RANJAB. Not yet, master. I—I waited to see if—if it were necessary.

BROOD. If he were dead you would have telephoned?

RANJAB. Yes, master.

MRS. BROOD. [*Shrilly.*] Then he is *not* dead?

RANJAB. No, madam.

BROOD. And they said I could hit a shilling at—

MRS. BROOD. Oh, you heartless, unfeeling beasts! [*Sharply, to Ranjab.*] Where is he? Where have you taken him?

RANJAB. To his own room, madam. The servants are excited—especially the maids. The wound is in his left breast—above the heart. One

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arm is fractured — as if by a fall. They are not accustomed to blood.

MRS. BROOD. I am going to him. There — there must be a chance. The doctor — the surgeon — James, why don't you call one at —

RANJAB. Madam will hasten if she desires to see Mr. Frederic alive.

MRS. BROOD. He shall not die! No, no! That was not what I meant — I swear it, James. I — I did not intend that harm should come to him. I do not wonder that you look at me like that. You do not understand. No one understands. Frederic did not understand — poor boy. For God's sake, James — if you love me, if you loved Matilde — send for Dr. Hodder. He's just across the street! Don't let this thing happen. If you ever loved me! [*He is coldly silent and she continues after a pause.*] Then I shall send for him. I am wasting time pleading with you. Ranjab, you are *not* to telephone to the police. Do you hear? It will be time enough if — if he should die. Then — [*laughs wildly*] then you can tell them that he walked in his sleep. That will save what is left of family respect. James, you will see the servants. You will tell — God, I forgot her! You will tell Miss Desmond. He loved her! He loved her!

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BROOD. [*Looking at her sharply.*] What are you saying?

MRS. BROOD. He loved Lydia Desmond. Pah, it was not love that he felt for me! No more was it love, as you call it, that I felt for him. [*Up stage.*] I've known it all along. He was tricked! I — I, do you see — I tricked him — just as I started out to trick you! Wait! Wait until I have done all I can for him. Then I will come back to this room, and I shall have something to say to you.

[*Exit Mrs. Brood R.*]

BROOD. [*To Ranjab.*] Close that window. I am chilled to the bone. [*Ranjab closes the window.*] Will he die?

RANJAB. Yes, master.

BROOD. Soon?

RANJAB. Perhaps now, master.

BROOD. [*Hesitating.*] Dr. Hodder could do nothing?

RANJAB. I'm afraid not. It is very bad.

BROOD. Did you hear what she said about — about tricking him?

RANJAB. Yes, master.

BROOD. What did she mean?

RANJAB. The ways of the cobra are mysterious.

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BROOD. Ranjab, — I — I — [*his hand to his eyes*] — perhaps you would better go for Dr. Hodder. I — I — Good God, I can't let him die like this! We must do something for the sake of appearances. We must stop the tongues of the servants. Go!

RANJAB. You will not come down to see him?

BROOD. His eyes? His eyes, Ranjab?

RANJAB. He was conscious, master. They were open.

BROOD. Then I — I can't look at them. I can't see him!

[*A door slams downstairs.*]

RANJAB. [*Looking off R.*] Some one has just come in from the street, master.

BROOD. An officer? He heard the shot. Tell him I — I cannot be seen at present. I —

RANJAB. It is a woman, master. She is coming upstairs. [*Steps outside and returns at once.*] Dr. Hodder came in with her. She is coming here.

[*Stands back and waits for the entrance of Lydia Desmond.*]

[*Lydia enters R., stepping up as if about to speak to Brood. Then she suddenly puts her hands over her eyes as if to shut out something*

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horrible to the sight. Brood motions to Ranjab to leave the room. Exit Ranjab. Lydia suddenly turns as if to fly from the room.]

BROOD. [*In distress.*] Lydia! Lydia! [*She stops and slowly faces him.*] Don't do that!

LYDIA. [*Coming swiftly down to him, her wide eyes bent upon his face.*] I — oh, it was so startling! Your face! It was so like his, just then.

BROOD. Like his? Frederic's?

LYDIA. Yes, yes! Oh, Mr. Brood! [*Sinks into the chair at right of the table and drops her head upon her arms.*]

BROOD. [*After a moment, puts his hand upon her hair.*] You know, then? It was you who ran for Dr. Hodder? [*Lydia shrinks from his hand in horror. He looks at it quickly, as if fearing that there might be blood upon it.*] You know why — why I fired from that window, Lydia? You know how it all came about?

LYDIA. [*Lifting her head, her hands to her temples.*] I only know that you wanted to kill him. Mr. Brood, you wanted to murder him long before that shot was fired. No matter what caused you to fire it to-night, the impulse was not a new one. Your chance came. You took it and gloated. You knew

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it was Frederic down there long before you fired. You were waiting for him as a cat waits for a bird. And you have done what you set out to do. You will say it was an accident, a horrible, frightful mistake, and no one can deny you. Not even I!

BROOD. [*Calmly.*] If all that you say were true, my child, even then it would be better if I were not denied. As it now stands, the world will blame and pity me for killing my own son by mistake while he was walking in his sleep. The world will deplore the sad, dreadful fate of a fair-named, honored young man. The world will never know who and what he was nor why he actually came to his end. I — I am sorry for your sake. [*Stops and stares hard at her.*] You — you said something about my face and his just now. It was nervousness. You have seen him; you were filled with visions of what you had just seen. A fancy, Lydia, — a fancy.

LYDIA. [*Arising.*] So sure as you stand there with that look of awful doubt in your eyes, that shudder of fear in your heart, Mr. Brood, I *did* see his face in yours.

BROOD. [*Turning away nervously — then facing her hotly.*] I suppose you know that he was climbing up the vines to — to the balcony.

LYDIA. I don't believe it!

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BROOD. What! Lydia! I swear it!

LYDIA. It will do to tell the police. But this is not what I came up here for. Even now he may be breathing his last. You may not be in time to see him alive. Mr. Brood, I demand that you come with me to him *now* — to tell him that you lied to him out there in the gallery. On his death bed you must tell him that you lied to him. He won't reproach you. He cannot. He cannot speak. Your place is at his side now; it is not the place for the woman who would have damned his soul to the end of eternity. Come! She is there! You must drive her away from that bedside. Come!

BROOD. And if I refuse?

LYDIA. [*Suddenly breaking down.*] Oh, Mr. Brood, you can't refuse — you can't be so heartless.

BROOD. The time has passed when I can care for the good or bad opinion of any one. You are at liberty to think what you please of me. Miss Desmond, once for all, it was a thief in the night whom I shot. Do you understand?

LYDIA. [*Facing him bravely.*] Yes, I understand. Have it your way. But no matter what he was, no matter what he was about to do, no matter how you hated him for what he had already done, Mr. Brood, you shot him down without giving him a chance.

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Brave men don't shoot thieves — even thieves — in the back!

BROOD. [*Taking a step toward her.*] Stop, I say! [*She shrinks from him in sudden fear, and, with glaring eyes, backs towards the door and then quickly escapes.*]

BROOD. [*Staring after her, and looking at his hands.*] Good God, did she think I would strike her? Did she fear me in that — [*his hand to his eyes*] — Am I, after all, a murderer — a man to be feared — a man to be cursed? Damn them all, no! [*Goes up suddenly and looks from the window; then comes back to the table nervously.*] She meant that he — he had no chance, no warning. That I shot him in the back. Brave men do not shoot thieves — even thieves — in the back. Those were her words. She saw his face in mine! Pooh! That was excitement — fear. What feeling is that that comes over me? Remorse, regret, fear? No, no! He was worse than a thief! He — he — but who made him what he was? Why should he hesitate to steal from me? Did he owe me anything but hatred? What could my honor mean to him? After all that I had just taken from him — no, no! He laid his plans before that. He began weeks ago! Before he knew. [*Thinking.*] But what chance had he out

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there, clinging to that vine, his eyes, his thoughts, his heart set on that temptress above? What chance did I give him then? [*Comes to cupboard and pours out a large drink of liquor. His hand shakes as he raises it to his lips. Before drinking, he stops to watch his hand as it trembles. By an effort he succeeds in steadying the hand, whereupon he sets the glass down and walks away.*] My nerves were going! That's bad! There's something wrong! [*After waiting a moment he starts to leave the room by the door at R., plainly resolved to go to the side of Frederic.*] No! I can't go down there! I cannot see him! He knows that I did not give him a chance! [*Goes to the table and strikes the gong — at first timidly. Getting no response, he pounds it violently.*]

[*Ranjab enters, as if out of breath.*]

Well?

RANJAB. Dr. Hodder is there, master.

BROOD. What does he say?

RANJAB. I do not know. The door is locked.

BROOD. [*Quickly.*] Is there any one else with him?

RANJAB. Yes, master, Mrs. Brood.

BROOD. He permitted her to go in, eh?

RANJAB. She was there when he arrived, master. She would not go out. The butler has just tele-

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phoned for another doctor. And Madam has sent Robert for a priest.

BROOD. A priest? But I am not a Catholic — nor Frederic.

RANJAB. Madam is.

BROOD. [*Sitting down abruptly.*] Ranjab, it means that the — that the end is at hand?

RANJAB. Yes, master. The servants are saying that the priest will be here too late. They are wondering why you have not already killed me.

BROOD. Killed you!

RANJAB. They are saying that the last ring of that gong, master, was the sounding of my death knell. It called me here to be slain by you.

BROOD. What do you mean?

RANJAB. That I am to pay the penalty for my mistake. I have told Dr. Hodder in the presence of the servants that I fired the unhappy shot. Miss Desmond would have denied me, but —

BROOD. [*Arising.*] Ranjab, I cannot allow this. You are a — a noble friend, but — no, you must go down to them at once and say that I fired the shot, not you. Do as I tell you! No, better than that; keep them together in the dining-room until I come down. I shall tell them the truth myself.

RANJAB. The truth, master?

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BROOD. Yes, the truth!

RANJAB. Remember, master, that he will be dead. He will have paid for his folly. Hear me, master. Let him not go to the grave dishonored. He was not to blame, but he has paid.

BROOD. Go, now, and tell them that I will come down — after the priest has departed. That will be after — [*hesitates*].

RANJAB. Yes, master. [*Going.*] But why not let them believe that I —

BROOD. No! Now, go!

[*Exit Ranjab R.*]

[*Brood goes over quickly and takes up the glass of whiskey, only to put it down again a moment later, untouched.*]

BROOD. [*Going to the table, and sitting down at the right of it — a drawn look in his face.*] Matilde — Matilde, I have killed your boy — I have killed your boy! I wonder if you were looking at me when I did it. Were you hovering near him when I — [*Suddenly pulls himself together.*] What am I saying? Am I losing my mind?

[*Enter Riggs, followed by Dawes, at R., partly dressed and considerably agitated. Without see-*

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ing Brood, both of them hasten to the cupboard and with trembling hands begin jostling the bottles, each pouring a drink nervously, which he tosses off. Then, each politely motions for the other to refill, both doing so with alacrity.]

RIGGS. If I had had these two drinks inside me five minutes ago I don't believe that confounded doctor could have put me out of the room. Damn him, who has more right in there than I, best friend to his father?

DAWES. You were in the way, Joseph, there's no denying that.

RIGGS. In the way? [*Sniffing.*] In the way? Why, confound you, Dawes, somebody had to take charge of matters. Nobody but damned servants there — and women. Especially *she*. Then to have 'em order me out of the room! I intend to thrash that doctor just as soon as — What did you say?

DAWES. I did n't say a word.

RIGGS. I thought you said I could n't. Never say that, Dawes.

DAWES. [*Catching sight of Brood, who is looking at them immutably.*] Ahem! [*They stare at him for a moment, in silence.*] James, has — has any one told you what's going on downstairs?

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BROOD. Ranjab has brought word to me. You know, of course, my friends, that it was I who shot him — from that window.

RIGGS. They were all saying that until — until — I — I suddenly remembered that it was I who fired from my window. I saw a man and I was half asleep and I —

DAWES. [*Catching the inspiration.*] You? You? My dear Joseph, you are not yet awake if you say that. You know it was I who looked out and saw the — the man. I grabbed up the revolver and in a moment of distraction —

RIGGS. See here, Dawes, there's no sense in lying like this. What do you mean, sir, by disputing me? Confound it, sir, I can prove that you are lying. There has n't been a revolver in our room in five years. So how could you have done any shooting? James, don't pay any attention to him. I am perfectly willing to take the blame and the consequences for what I have done — for my frightful blunder — and I won't permit my old friend to shoulder it in my place.

DAWES. Joseph, I appreciate most deeply the motive which impels you to assume —

BROOD. [*Breaking in and crossing to them.*] You are true friends, both of you. I understand and

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appreciate. But, my old pals, it is n't necessary. I alone am responsible. From that window, see? That's all. I did it.

RIGGS. But — but you thought he was a burglar!

BROOD. Yes — I shot him for a thief. I — I did what any man might have done.

DAWES. God pity you, James; your own son! For God's sake, old man, let me take the blame. It won't matter so much if I'm the one. Take back what you've said. I am ready to —

RIGGS. James, I implore you to let me have my way in this. Turn me over to the police. It was an accident — a terrible mistake — but let the world execrate me for committing it — not you.

BROOD. [*His hands on their shoulders.*] We won't even discuss it, my friends. I thank you. You *are* my friends. *If* the police and the reporters come, I shall be the one — the proper one. Now, tell me, what — what is the news from down there?

DAWES. How — how did you come to do it?

BROOD. [*Hesitating.*] I happened to look from the window there. Frederic — Frederic walks in his sleep.

RIGGS. He does? That's news to me.

DAWES. God bless my soul, Joseph, how could you know? You were always asleep when he was

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walking. Don't contradict. I see, James. [*Brood's eyes drop, and the two old men look at each other meaningly. Then they grasp his hands and wring them.*]

BROOD. But what are they doing down there? Speak!

RIGGS. That damned doctor is —

DAWES. Joseph, permit me! He — he also ordered me out, but I did n't lose my temper. The doctor is with him, James. The door is locked. I — I heard Lydia say that — that — er — you ought to be there. There may be time — yet.

BROOD. I cannot do that — no, I — I won't go down yet. I — I can't be of any assistance — I —

RIGGS. You'd probably be in the way. Confounded ignorant quack!

DAWES. James, I — I never realized how much Frederic resembles you until I saw him just now —

BROOD. [*Sharply.*] Don't! Nonsense! I'm sick of hearing that. Don't palaver! Don't lie to me, Dawes. There is n't a feature that — There's another doctor coming, is n't there? They've sent for one? Go down at once, my friends, and — and tell this new doctor that I want to see him up here, just as soon as he comes in. Wait for him at the door. You — you can't get Hodder out of there

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now — but — but I want to see the other one before he goes in. Do you hear? Go down at once! Don't stop to argue! I'll — I'll wait here!

[Fairly shoves them out of the room at door R.]

[Coming down and speaking to the idol.] They all suspect. They don't say it, but they all know that he was going up to her room and they know that I was well aware of it. Gad, I don't wonder that they're careful with their words. Huh! They're trying to spare my feelings, my pride, my honor, even more than they're trying to shield me from the odium, the horror that attends the deed. *[Reflectively.]* She said she would return. She has something to say to me. *[Laughs bitterly.]* Well, we're agreed on that. She *has* something to say to me — a great deal to say to me. She expects me to drive her out as I did the other one. Well, my knowing, inscrutable friend, she may be disappointed, eh? I've changed my mind. We'll find another way of punishing her, eh? We'll let her beg and grovel and plead and promise and — *[catching himself up sharply.]* No, she's not the kind to beg and grovel. She's made of different stuff. Damn her, she'll laugh at me! *[Turns quickly as he hears a noise in the hall.]*

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[Enter Mrs. Brood at R., strangely calm. She comes down unfalteringly, unsmilingly, her eyes upon his face, stopping at the head of the table.]

MRS. BROOD. Now, James, we have come to the hour of reckoning. Oh, I'm not afraid of your silence any more than I am afraid of your words. There is nothing you can say or do. I told you I would come back. You did not say you would wait, but I see that you have done so. First of all, Frederic is expected to die. Dr. Hodder says so. He is a great surgeon. He ought to know. But — but he does n't know. I sha'n't let him die.

BROOD. One moment, please. We may as well be spared the theatrics. It is a condition which we have to discuss — and it does not relate wholly to the life or death of that poor wretch downstairs. It has to do with two people who at this moment are vitally alive. We will not include Frederic in the hour of reckoning. We —

MRS. BROOD. *[Intently.]* You are very much mistaken. He is a part of the reckoning. He is the one great character in this unhappy, unlooked-for climax. Now! Take one long, good look into my face and see what you can find there! Look closely! I mean it. What is it that has been puz-

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zling you for months — ever since the night you first saw me? Is n't there a vague something that takes you back twenty years or more? My eyes, my mouth, my hair — yes, my voice? Well! What do you see?

BROOD. [*Staring hard at her face.*] There is something that has always puzzled me.

MRS. BROOD. Have you never petitioned your graven friend there to unravel the mystery for you? In the quiet of certain lonely, speculative hours have you not wondered where you had seen me before — long before? In all the years that you have been convincing yourself that Frederic is not your son, has there not been another face constantly obtruding itself into your vision? Well!

BROOD. [*Aghast.*] Matilde! Good God, Yvonne!

MRS. BROOD. Yes, Matilde.

BROOD. [*Nonplussed.*] It cannot be possible — you are young. She would be forty-five at least. Oh, I — in the devil's name, who are you? Are you — are you a ghost? Are you the spirit of — of — What trick, what chicanery is this? Has her soul, her spirit, her being taken possession of you, to come here to curse me?

MRS. BROOD. [*Smiling grimly.*] So you *do* see at last! Yes, James Brood, the spirit of Matilde

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Valeska! Come to curse you! No; to compel you to curse yourself! [*He glares at her, his jaw hanging.*] But — [*suddenly tremulous*] — but I did not intend that it should come to this. I — I could not have dreamed that Fate would take such an advantage of me, after all these years of waiting and planning and praying.

BROOD. Who are you? What are you? You — you cannot be Matilde! That is preposterous! You have her eyes, her voice —

MRS. BROOD. Matilde in spirit only. Her blood is in my veins — her wrongs are in my heart. Sit down there and listen to me. The time has come. I have failed. God has been against me, and the devil has been with you. The devil triumphs! [*He sits at the left of the table, never taking his eyes from her face. She places herself before him, standing to his left.*] I am Matilde Valeska's sister!

BROOD. Impossible! Good God in heaven!

MRS. BROOD. And her avenger! Now do you begin to see? Now do you begin to realize what I came here to do? Why I married you? To serve your heart as you served hers. To make you pay!

BROOD. Matilde's sister!

MRS. BROOD. The little Therese of more than twenty years ago. Ah, you remember me — seven-

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year-old Therese. The child who would not speak to you, nor kiss you, nor say good-by to you when you took her big sister — her beloved sister — away from the Bristol in the Kartnerring twenty-three years ago. Ah, can I ever forget that wedding night? Can I ever forget the sorrow, the loneliness, the hatreds that grew in my poor little heart that night? Every one was so happy — all but me! I was wild with grief! Ah, how I loved her — how I loved her! And you took her away from me! You stood before the altar in St. Stephen's with her and promised — promised — promised! All Vienna, all Buda Pesth said that you promised nothing but happiness to each other. And so you took her away — away across the awful sea — to — to — this! To this house she came, James Brood, twenty-three years ago. You brought her here, a happy young thing of twenty-two. How did you send her away? How?

BROOD. Stop! You forget that there *was* a reason!

MRS. BROOD. She died ten years ago. On her death bed, into the ears of her priest, into these ears of mine, as she gave her pure soul to God, she vowed that there was no reason! I believed her — the holy priest believed her — God believed her! You would have believed her, too, James Brood! She

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was a good woman. Do you hear? A pure woman. And you branded her and drove her out and — persecuted her. You did that to my sister!

BROOD. And yet you married me!

MRS. BROOD. Not because I loved you. *She* loved you to the day she died — after all you heaped upon her — after all! What greater anguish could be cast about a mother than to keep her child from her? The boy she bore and loved and yet died without seeing. Because you denied him to her! You said he was not your son. Then why did you keep him from her? *She* was his mother. You kept him with you — guarded and accursed — only to drive the barb more deeply into her tortured, innocent heart. You let her die, after years of pleading, without one glimpse of the child she had brought into the world — her child. To punish her you did this — to work out the bitter end that your jealousy had inspired. That 's what you did to Matilde, my sister! For ten long years! Oh, God, how I hated you when I married you!

BROOD. I don't believe a word of what you are saying. You are building an excuse for your devilish conduct —

MRS. BROOD. Don't you believe that I am her sister?

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BROOD. You — yes, by heaven, I *must* believe that. Why have I been so blind? You are the little Therese — I remember you. You hated me then. You —

MRS. BROOD. That was a child's despairing hate because you were taking her away. It did not last. When her happy letters came back to us, full of your kindness and your devotion, I forgot that you had robbed me. I came to look upon you as the fairy prince, after all. It was not until she — *she* herself — came all the way across the ocean and began to die before our eyes — she was ten years dying — not until then that I began to hate you in a different way. And, oh, how I came to hate you, James Brood!

BROOD. In God's name, why did you marry me? Why have you taken her place?

MRS. BROOD. To take her son away from you!

BROOD. And I still maintain that he was her son, I must say that I don't see how you were robbing me.

MRS. BROOD. You had a good, true wife, who never wronged you by thought or deed. You accused her of betraying you. It was a lie. You never were sure. You suspected. Jealousy did the rest. Years after you have another wife — not so good,

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perhaps, but just as true. Do you hear that? It was part of my plan to be absolutely true. Well, you — you loved me. I know that. What could be more fitting than that the son you despised should steal away from you — in the days when you are trying to forget — steal away the woman in whom you had found forgetfulness? The son you had guarded so well — the son you disowned! Now, do you see?

BROOD. Go on! I still need to be convinced.

MRS. BROOD. [*Looking at him for a moment and then sitting down near him.*] I think I'll tell you my story from the beginning. When my sister came home, cast out and degraded, I was but nine years of age, but old enough to know that a dreadful thing had happened. My father wanted to come to America to kill you. He did come later on, but you had gone to Africa. I could see by their actions that you had done her a grave wrong. At first I could not understand. She had loved you so. At last she told me that you would not let her have her baby boy. After that, my father and my uncles made every effort to get the boy away from you — but he was hidden — how carefully you know yourself. For ten years they were looking for him. For ten years she never ceased writing to you to let her

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have him — if only for a little while at a time. You never answered. You scorned her. Then my father died. Matilde and I were living at the old house in Buda Pesth. We were rich, but all of our money could not find a way to get that boy away from you. At last she told me what it was that you accused her of. She told me about Guido Vanani, the music master. I can't go into that. He was nothing to her but a music master, James Brood. He came casually into her life and as carelessly passed out of it.

BROOD. Yes — I pitched him out of a door downstairs.

MRS. BROOD. And he challenged you! Why did you not fight him?

BROOD. Because *she* implored me not to kill him. Did she tell you that?

MRS. BROOD. Yes. But you were not usually so considerate at that time. It's strange that you could oblige her in that one instance and in no other. No. It was because you were not sure of yourself.

BROOD. I deny that!

MRS. BROOD. Never mind. It is enough that Vanani went out of her life. Now, hear me. You did an injustice to a most honorable gentleman — a noble gentleman. His one letter to her after the

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scene with you, I have here in this packet! [*Draws a packet from her bosom.*] But one letter from him! I have brought it here for you to read. But later on. There are other things here for you to read, James Brood. They are from the grave! After Frederic was born, you drove her away! We — we won't go into that. She told me about it — Oh, God, how horrible that must have been! A jealous madman against a weak, terrified woman!

BROOD. You — you need *not* go into that. Don't, I command you! I will suffer you to speak of yourself and of the present, but not of — of that other time.

MRS. BROOD. Well, you accused her and drove her out. My sister — one of a noble family, of a family of great, good men and women. It was winter — oh, how I freeze when I think of it! You kept the child. You gave him your name. You had him brought up in total ignorance of his mother until such a time as you could present her before him in terms of scorn and obloquy. All this she could not but feel and know. You kept him with you only to inflict her with all the pain you could devise. You cannot deny this, you dare not deny it. Well, she waited and hoped and pleaded, as I said before. You gave no sign. You let her die without a glimpse

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of her boy — without a word or a sign from him. You let her die under a cloud, a lonely, miserable, crushed woman who might have been sixty instead of thirty-five — the once glorious, beautiful, vivacious Matilde Valeska. Ah, I do not wonder that you shrink and draw back from me.

BROOD. Now I can see why you have taken up this fight against me. You have hated me well.

MRS. BROOD. Hated you, James Brood, and — yes, loved you!

BROOD. Loved me! I thought it was love, but —

MRS. BROOD. In spite of myself! Yes, I have seen hours in which my hatred slipped out somehow and gave way to love. But it was not I who loved — it was I who hated. It was the spirit of Matilde that crept into me and drove out the hatred of Therese. She loved you to the end. She never hated you. That was it. It was the undying, imploring love of Matilde that fought and overcame the hatred of Therese. I believe as firmly as I believe that I am alive that Matilde's love has at times been greater than my hatred — I believe that she has been near me in spirit all these years, battling against my desire for vengeance. You cannot understand that, James Brood, because you do not believe in the transmigration of the soul. You do

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not believe we have souls. And yet there have been times when I actually felt that I was Matilde; when I really experienced an unmistakable, amazing feeling of love for you. It must have been the influence from that strange, mysterious world in which the dead people live. Those were the times when you were unconsciously yet vividly reminded of Matilde Valeska. And all this time, in spite of your cruelty to her, I have felt that you loved her, not me.

BROOD. [*Slowly.*] You are the most wondrous woman I have ever known. I have thought of you as Matilde a hundred times when I've held you in my arms.

MRS. BROOD. And so it was that I, Therese, found out that you had a heart and could love. You must have loved her.

BROOD. I did. I worshiped her.

MRS. BROOD. It was years after her death that I met you — in Paris. Again in Vienna. Again in Buda Pesth. Why did you go to Vienna and Buda Pesth? Because you were driven by remorse. I knew that you visited her tomb in disguise and on the darkest of nights. I knew that before you married me you made a tardy effort to find Vanani. You found his grave. And so you could not ask

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him, man to man, on the honor of men, if you had wronged her. Somehow you felt that he would tell you that you had, and you wanted to hear him say it. After that, you turned to me. The spell was upon you. I had found you and you were in the web. There was no escape. I was no longer the Therese of long ago, but Yvonne Drodga, your nemesis. I'll not speak of the brief court you paid to me in Paris. It is fresh in your memory. But you will never know how I prayed that you might not get away from me. You'll never know how I rejoiced when we were married, but not in the way that most brides rejoice. No! It was the joy of having you where I wanted you! Where I could strike the surest and the deepest. You — you were going to take me to my sister's son. And I — your wife — was going there to take him away from you. To take him in the way that would hurt you more than any other way that woman or Satan could devise. So!

BROOD. [*Watching her intently as she pauses for breath.*] And the cards fell out badly after all. Fate turned the trick. You took him to his death. Are you satisfied?

MRS. BROOD. You don't feel the blow, even as it is?

BROOD. I am beginning to feel sorry for you. By

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heaven, Yvonne, your plan deserved a better fate than this.

MRS. BROOD. Have — have you no pain, no grief in knowing that you have killed your own son?

BROOD. [*Starting up — realizing.*] Good God, if he should be my — *my* son!

MRS. BROOD. He is! I swear it before God! He could be no other man's son. I have her dying word for that. She said it in the presence of her God, and God, who knows, spoke to us through her! He is your son! Wait! Not yet! You've got to hear me to the end! Then you can go to him.

BROOD. [*Hoarsely.*] If this is true — if this is true!

MRS. BROOD. Here! Take this packet of letters! Read them as you sit there beside his death bed. No! Not that! He must not die — he shall not! I did not mean that. I — I only wanted to take him away from you — not to have him killed like this. [*Chokingly.*] There are her letters — The letter of Vanani — her death-bed letter to you. Oh, you will cringe when you read that! And a letter to your son and hers! Read that to him! If you can!

BROOD. [*Standing over her bent figure.*] Why should you, even in your longing for revenge, have planned to damn and disgrace him even more than I could have done? Was it just to your sister's son

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that you should drag him into a sin even worse than I had committed? You were making a scoundrel of him — not a man! You were damning his soul forever!

MRS. BROOD. No! I did not love him in that way.

BROOD. And yet you were —

MRS. BROOD. Wait! Perhaps you have a right to think that of me. I am years older than he. I loved him as his mother would have loved him. He would not have been degraded. My vengeance would not have been worth while if I could not have left you to believe that he had stolen your wife away from you — the wife you loved — if I could not have made you feel that God had cursed you in His most ingenious way. No! *He* would have been safe. He was only fascinated — as I intended. He was going away with me — going to the old home across the sea — the home he had not seen — to get away from you, the father who hated him. We were going to-morrow — on the fastest ship that sails. When we were on the ocean I should have explained. I should have told him everything. He would not have gone, I truly believe, if you had not told him to-night that you are not his father. That decided him. He thought he loved me. He

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did not love you. You had killed all of that in him. So he was going away with me. After I had told him everything, don't you know that he would have respected and forgiven the sister of his mother? No, James Brood, he would have understood, and he would have gloried in what I had done. The blind would have fallen from his eyes and he would have realized that it was not love that he had felt for me. The spell would be over. He would be safe.

BROOD. But, answer me this, Yvonne: why was he going to your room to-night? Going in the manner he did?

MRS. BROOD. He was going in that manner because Fate, my enemy, had ruled that he should play into your hand, after all. That was the fatal move. He was coming there to get my jewels and this roll of bills — see! They are hundred-dollar bills! My *own* money, James Brood! For I would not have made that kind of a thief of him. Money that I brought with me from my own home! Crowns that I have changed into bills! He was to take passage for us in the morning — brother and sister! [*She has taken another package from her dress.*]

BROOD. Brother and sister?

MRS. BROOD. And then, after I had taken him away from you, do you know what my next step

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was to have been? After he was in Vienna and pining away for some one he had left behind?

BROOD. Not — not for me? (*Hopefully*).

MRS. BROOD. Don't flatter yourself. No. For Lydia Desmond. He was to write for her to come to him. All this I had thought out, oh, so beautifully. He loves her — not me. Time would have told that to him. He has loved her all along. And she would have come to him. She would have come after his letter, believe me! Then, ah, then we should have been a happy family in — in dear old Vienna! We three! They would not have turned me out!

BROOD. A happy family! God, I — I am beginning to realize! A happy family — and I left out — I left out! I, the hated and despised! Oh, Yvonne, you — *you* would have given me more misery than either of us could have dreamed of.

MRS. BROOD. But how has it turned out? Am I any happier for what I have done? What have I accomplished? What have I wrought? My purpose was weakened. I faltered. I weakened under the love she bore for you — I permitted it to creep in and fill my heart — *my* bitter heart! Do you understand? God, I have failed! I have lost after all these years! Is there triumph for me in the knowl-

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edge that you have shot your own son? Is there glory in it for me to know that he may die believing me to be a bad woman — that he lost his life for a woman whom he expected to make his mistress? Believing me to be a faithless wife — oh, James Brood, I have failed!

BROOD. You have lost — everything, Yvonne!

MRS. BROOD. [*Slowly arising — comprehending.*] I suppose I shall have to go. You will turn me out.

BROOD. I — I cannot ask you to stay.

MRS. BROOD. But he is not — yet — dead.

BROOD. [*Suddenly distracted.*] God, he may be! He may be now. And I have killed him.

MRS. BROOD. Ah, at last you see — you know! I can see into your heart — into your brain, James Brood! You *know* he is *your* boy! You know my sister was as pure as snow! Ah, that is something — that is something

BROOD. [*Hastily.*] They've all said he looks like me — I have seen it at times — I have always felt it. I purposely fought against it — unreasonably, madly, cruelly. Now it is too late and I see! I see, I feel! Damn you! You have driven me to kill my own son!

MRS. BROOD. Yes! After you had struck a blow that was worse than death! After you had cursed

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him and wrecked his soul! You say I must go. You mean to drive me out. Very well. I do not forget that I was going — to-morrow. But let me say this to you: I shall not leave this house until he is lying stiff and cold in death or so far recovered as to listen to my side of the story. One or the other! I will not go! I shall stay here, in this house, either to nurse him back to life or to sit with you beside his casket — a mourner. Now, you may go to him!

[Enter Dr. Hodder at R., hastily. He is nervous and in his shirt sleeves, his sleeves rolled up.]

HODDER. Well, are we to notify the police?

BROOD. *[Starting toward him — hoarsely.]* Is — is he dead?

HODDER. No. Hang it all, sir, you have called in another doctor and a priest. I don't see why the devil you have n't sent for the police and an undertaker.

MRS. BROOD. Is he conscious? Does he know?

BROOD. For God's sake, Hodder, is there any chance?

HODDER. To be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Brood, I don't believe there is. It went in here. *[Pointing just above the heart.]* It came out here.

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[*Indicating his back.*] He's not conscious. He was. He asked for Miss Desmond. Mr. Brood, he does not know who it was that shot him. It may soften the pain for you to feel that he'll never know. But that's neither here nor there. Are the police to be sent for now — or — or afterwards?

BROOD. [*Looking at Mrs. Brood intently.*] We'll wait, Dr. Hodder.

HODDER. [*After a pause.*] Do you care to see him?

BROOD. [*In anguish.*] See him! Yes! Yes! [*Going up as Mrs. Brood grasps his arm and checks him. Hodder is in the door.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Softly, meaningly.*] Don't forget that he hates you, James Brood. Don't let him see you now! It won't — help — him — any! I think he'd much rather see me — than you!

[*He breaks away, with a look of despair, and rushes off after Dr. Hodder. Mrs. Brood stands like a statue for a moment and then slowly begins to tell the beads which she takes from the pocket of her dressing-gown.*]

CURTAIN

[*End of Act III.*]

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ACT FOURTH

Six weeks later. Time: Ten o'clock in the morning of a May day. The stage is set to represent the little garden in rear of Brood's home. The right side of the setting represents the inner façade of the main part of the residence, with windows and a wide door and landing from which three steps lead down to the level of the little grassy court. The rear of the stage shows a high brick wall, with a small gate which opens into the alley, near upper L., on the opposite side of which stands the stable and garage. Vines cling to this wall and there are such signs of springtime gardening in evidence as a reel of hose, spades and rakes. On the left-hand side of the stage is the vine-covered balcony which Frederic had tried to ascend, with the French window of Mrs. Brood's room above. There are Italian benches at right and left and a small fountain in the middle of the stage. There are some bushes ready to be planted standing against the brick wall up stage. Near the little gate is a pile of hand luggage, with steamer rugs, coats, etc.

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Enter Ranjab, door at R., followed by Parker, the manservant, both of them carrying bags and rugs, which they add to the pile near the gate. The manservant returns to the house, while Ranjab, remaining near the pile, consults a small slip of paper, evidently a list, checking off the pieces which have been carried out. He is dressed in an ordinary sack suit of black, and is hatless. There are gold wristbands on his wrists, as there have been throughout the entire play.

Enter Joseph Riggs and Danbury Dawes, door R., both in brand new blue serge suits, white shoes and blue caps. Each wears a bright blue ribbon on the lapel of his coat, and on the visor band of the caps is the name "Maisie." Each carries over his arm a checked English ulster. Riggs has in his hand a hot-water bottle wrapped in a towel, while Dawes has toothbrush, flesh-brush, tooth powder box, and razor strop in his hand. They cross over to Ranjab.

RIGGS. Ranjab, will you look up that little brown bag of mine and put this water bottle in it for me? I forgot it when packing.

DAWES. And get my bag out of that pile, too. I came within an ace of forgetting my toothbrush and

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razor strop. Do you know, Joseph, I'm always forgetting my toothbrush.

RIGGS. Well, are you sure you have n't left your teeth? Last time we went away you forgot them. And, say, what do you always carry a razor strop for? You have n't shaved in twenty-five years.

DAWES. [*At a loss for a moment.*] But suppose I'd take a sudden notion to shave off my beard? Ha, you never thought of that, did you? Of course not. Besides, what would you do if I did n't take my strop along? You 've used it for twenty years. You 've got my razors in your bag now.

RIGGS. Oh, I can buy a strop if necessary. Don't throw that up to me. And, that reminds me, I did n't put your razors into my bag. I forgot 'em, clean. They 're on the window-sill in the bathroom, Dawes. You 'd better get 'em. Damned silly thing to be taking your strop along and leaving your razors behind. I packed the mug and brush for you. You 'd have forgotten them if it had n't been for me.

DAWES. I'm not sure that we have time to get 'em now. How soon do we leave for the yacht, Ranjab?

RANJAB. [*Who has found the bags and placed them on a bench.*] In half an hour, sir. The trunks

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went aboard an hour ago. Mr. and Mrs. Gunning will be here at 10.30.

RIGGS. [*Putting his hot-water bottle into the bag.*] There 's no danger of missing the boat?

DAWES. [*Putting in his articles.*] How can there be? It belongs to Gunning and it won't sail until he 's aboard. You 'll have plenty of time to get the razors. I say, it 's a bit coolish out here. I think I 'll put my coat on. These early spring days are deceptive. Give me a lift, Joseph.

RIGGS. [*Holding Dawes' coat.*] If it 's too cold for you, why don't you go into the house? By George, that is a nobby coat, old man. I 've never seen it on you out of doors. Looks much better than it does in the house. Would you mind holding mine? It is a bit chilly.

DAWES. [*Holds Riggs' coat.*] The fresh air feels good. I feel like a boy, Joseph. Do you know it 's more than ten years since we 've — er — had holiday like this? That is a nice coat.

RIGGS. [*Looking up at the house, R.*] I was beginning to get a bit seedy. The sea voyage will do me a world of good. I 've had a vague idea that I 'd be seasick, just to celebrate the occasion. Do you suppose they 'll remember us at Monte Carlo?

DAWES. Remember us? My dear fellow, why

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should they have shorter memories than we? 'Gad, I have n't forgotten Monte Carlo. [*They look at their watches simultaneously — each surreptitiously glancing over at the other's.*] I declare I've let mine run down.

RIGGS. Ahem, mine's stopped. How aggravating. [*Impulsively.*] Danbury, old man, do you know I have n't wound the damned thing in six years?

DAWES. [*Relieved.*] The same here. It shows how careless one grows if — er — he is n't careful. This is the first time I've really wanted to know what time it is in six years or more.

RIGGS. I guess we're a bit behind the times, Comrade. We're back numbers. [*They sit down upon the bench at left center, very soberly.*] We're not just exactly what we used to be.

DAWES. There's no denying that, Joseph. We're old fogies. The idea of not winding a watch in six years!

RIGGS. This is the first new suit of clothes I've had in five years. Used to have a new suit every month or so. Let's see, Danbury, how old *are* you?

DAWES. I was just about to ask that of you.

RIGGS. I'd rather you would n't ask such confounded impertinent questions. It's none of your

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business. Say, it's warmer than I thought. [*Takes off his coat, Dawes doing the same.*] *They fold them carefully and lay them across their knees.*] I have n't had a drink since yesterday. [*Fingers his blue ribbon.*]

DAWES. [*Looks at his own.*] I know it. You don't need to tell me. I had it with you. I think it's a low-down trick of Jim Brood to compel us — absolutely to bully us — into swearing off — er — take the pledge as you might say — for all of this trip. Sometimes I wonder whether it is worth it.

RIGGS. They might have left the women at home.

DAWES. The women! There's where the joke comes in. Confound 'em, the women may drink as much as they please on the cruise — and the crew, too, for that matter — but *we* — you and I — are obliged to give up everything. Jim Brood says we'll like it after we get used to it. He says it's a fine thing to be sober. Just as if I never had been!

RIGGS. What's the fun in a cruise if the grog's cut off? [*Looks up at Ranjab, and then cautiously into Dawes' ear.*] Do you know what I'm going to do when I reach the Riviera?

DAWES. Yes.

RIGGS. How the devil do you know?

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DAWES. You're going ashore and get boiling drunk.

RIGGS. Do I talk in my sleep? [*Placing his hand on his brow.*]

DAWES. No. It's spiritual telepathy. I daresay Jim's right. It would n't do to let you have liquor on the boat. You *do* get awfully tight, Joseph.

RIGGS. Tight? Why, you damned scoundrel, I defy you to prove it.

DAWES. The night Frederic was wounded you were so drunk that the doctors worked over you for half an hour, thinking you had taken poison. You were a terrible nuisance.

RIGGS. How many times have I told you that Dr. Hodder said it was my heart? Over-exerted myself, carrying you to bed. That's what I did! Say, are n't you listening? That's it! You never pay any attention when I try to explain. That's why you don't know. That's why I have to repeat it over and over again. That's —

DAWES. The only thing you repeat is the drunk. [*They turn their backs upon one another — insulted.*]

[*Ranjab comes down, without instructions, and coolly takes up one overcoat and then the other and holds it for the owner, who mechanically slips it on and resumes his seat.*]

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DAWES. [*Reflectively.*] Dear old Monte Carlo! We'll soon be there. Right time of the year — May.

RIGGS. A little late, old chap. April is best.

DAWES. You're right. We should have started earlier.

RIGGS. Was n't safe to take Frederic away short of six weeks after the accident. Sea trip will do him a world of good.

DAWES. I'll never forget the brown-haired girl I met at Monte Carlo. By George, she was splendid. She —

RIGGS. You met her in Alexandria. It was I who met a blonde at Monte Carlo.

DAWES. Perhaps you're right, Joseph. I may be confused as to the locality, but not as to the girls. Ah, me! Those were gay days, eh? 'Gad, it makes me feel thirty years younger to think of 'em.

RIGGS. I wonder if she's still there? I feel that much younger myself.

DAWES. I would n't like to chance her being thirty years younger, my dear boy. Women can't live down things as men do, you know. Thirty years is a long time to a woman.

[*Enter Lydia, door at R., attired in a gray traveling dress, hat to match, etc. She has a small*

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red leather jewel case which she proceeds to place in a small bag after Ranjab has found it in the pile.]

LYDIA. One always forgets something. Thank you, Ranjab. I am really not accountable, though. I'm so excited. Mr. Brood wants the motor at the gate in twenty minutes, Ranjab. Tell Andrew. The bags are all ready to go? Splendid. Mr. Frederic refuses to have the car brought to the front of the house. He insists upon leaving by the back gate and — the alley! Think of it! The alley! Poor boy, he is so white and so weak, he's afraid people will stare at him if he goes out by the front door. But, oh, Ranjab, he will be well and strong in a month. Dr. Hodder says so. [*Involuntarily looks at the vines and the balcony at left and shakes her head.*] I cannot look at that place without shuddering.

DAWES. [*Ruminating, not having seen Lydia.* By George, she *was* a pretty girl. [*Riggs still is thinking.*]

LYDIA. [*Coming down.*] Oh, here you are all tiked out in your new clothes. Stand up and let me see. [*They start in surprise and then both stand up quickly for inspection.*] Goodness, you're like two college boys.

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RIGGS. I think there's one of these shoes a little tight, but I'm not sure which one. You see, both of my feet are numb.

LYDIA. Perhaps they're both tight, you poor dear.

DAWES. Pardon me, Lydia, did you say they or you?

LYDIA. Is n't it a perfectly gorgeous day? To-night we'll be out to sea! Think of it! I've never been east of Coney Island, Mr. Riggs. Think of it!

RIGGS. I've never been west of the Hudson River.

LYDIA. Oh, nonsense! You've been all over the world.

RIGGS. I've been in Asia and Africa and Borneo and South America and — Iceland, but I've never been to Jersey City.

DAWES. How's Frederic feeling, Lydia? He's all right, eh? We sha'n't have to postpone sailing. 'Pon my word, I'm rather anxious to start, now that I've started.

LYDIA. He's ever so much better, and he's perfectly wild about going. For a year and a half! Just think of it! Cruising and sight seeing and being happy for a year and a half. I know I shall wake up and — [*shakes her head*].

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RIGGS. Well, six weeks ago I would n't have given two cents for his chances. Wonderful constitution.

LYDIA. I *knew* that he'd get well. I never doubted.

DAWES. That's what I said.

RIGGS. You? Why, Dawes, you dressed for the funeral.

[*Enter Dr. Hodder R., nervously, peering about through his glasses.*]

HODDER. Ah, here you are, Miss Desmond. Mrs. Gunning has just telephoned to say that they are starting at once in their motor and will be here in fifteen minutes — barring fatalities. You and I are to go with them to the dock. I believe you gentlemen are to go over in a cab.

RIGGS. [*Indignantly.*] Don't we go in a motor?

HODDER. I think not. Don't want to crowd Frederic in Mr. Brood's car, you see.

DAWES. I've half a notion not to go, at all. A cab!

RIGGS. [*Plaintively.*] Doctor, I've — I've never ridden in an automobile.

HODDER. You don't mean it! Ranjab! Telephone for a taxicab!

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RANJAB. [*Smiling as he goes up R.*] Very good, sir.

DAWES. Say, Ranjab! Have it come to the back gate, here. Not in front! No taxicab at the front door for me.

[Exit Ranjab R. Riggs and Dawes look at their watches, and then at each other, and then go up to the alley gate, which they open and go through considerable pantomimic conversation respecting the proposed position of the two motors, taking off their overcoats finally and sitting down, at odds, upon two bags.]

HODDER. Well, Miss Lydia, we'll soon be off. A life on the ocean wave!

LYDIA. It's so good of the Gunnings to do this for us, Dr. Hodder.

HODDER. My dear young lady, Gunning is always doing the right thing, only he seldom knows it. This cruise is nothing to him. Five months to a man with five millions! What's he got a yacht for if not to take people about in it? Now five months is quite a different matter with me. I am a working man. I'm afraid my clients can't wait till I return. Five months is a long time to a fellow who wants

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his stomach scraped or his brain remodeled. He's usually in a hurry about it. And then, just think how the tonsils and adenoids will thrive while I am away. With no one to tell the patients they've got 'em! Dear me, it's quite criminal on my part.

LYDIA. Can't you cut them out at reduced rates when you return?

HODDER. Sort of bargain lots in tonsils and adenoids, eh? I suppose I'll have to.

LYDIA. Besides, Frederic is your most important patient just now. He's the one who needs you most. That's why you are going with us to the Mediterranean, sacrificing every one else.

HODDER. By Jove, it *will* be glorious! We'll have him as well as ever by the time we pass Gibraltar, my word for it. He's gaining like a whirlwind these days. I—I would n't have believed it. Something like a miracle, 'pon my word.

LYDIA. He has had wonderful care.

HODDER. The nursing did it—that and his desperate desire to get well. Doctors can't help a fellow unless he wants to help himself. I—I really think he owes his life—instead of his death—to his father. That man is the most changed of any human being I've ever known. He has turned from flint to eiderdown before our very eyes. I have a

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vague notion that James Brood prays now and then. You never thought of his doing that two months ago, did you?

LYDIA. I think we've all learned how to pray, Dr. Hodder.

HODDER. [*Cautiously.*] Even to Mrs. Brood.

LYDIA. I shall never forget that awful night when she followed Mr. Brood into — into the room where Frederic was dying. Even you, Dr. Hodder, said that he was breathing his last. Can you ever forget how she stood over Frederic and lifted her hands towards God — with never a word — just looking up — up — up! As I believe in my soul, Dr. Hodder, so sure am I that God listened to her mute appeal and to no other. When she at last looked down into Frederic's gray, still face, I — I myself — saw him open his eyes and look into hers. From that instant he began life anew. It was as if he were born again.

HODDER. I saw. I knew. It was n't science. I have tried to name it in my notes, Miss Lydia. I've called it a psychic miracle.

LYDIA. Afterwards she came to me, out in the hall, and put her arm about me. I — I had never liked her before that. But there was something in her touch — in her voice — which changed me then.

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She was another person, Dr. Hodder. Absolutely another entity. Her voice was that of another's — a stranger's — her hand was loving and gentle and true. Her eyes were — they were as blue as sapphire, Dr. Hodder. Do you — do you think I imagined it? I have never gotten over it. In a little while — after that strange, sweet voice had bid me to hope, that Frederic would live for me — after that, she slowly seemed to return to the woman I had known and hated — to Mrs. Brood herself. She made me sit down beside her in the drawing room while she smoked a cigarette. She even hummed an air — you know the tune. But, Dr. Hodder, I've never had the slightest desire to hate her since that night. We are — yes, I love her and I am sure she loves me.

HODDER. She is a wonder-worker — a phenomenon that I can't undertake to describe. I see her here every day. She is as she was before the — er — the accident. Gay, impulsive, clever, and all that, but still there is a subtle distinction. The only being she seems to stand in awe of is — her husband. She's perfectly lawless, so far as I'm concerned.

LYDIA. Dr. Hodder, I sometimes feel that Mr. Brood stands — yes, in awe of her.

HODDER. Really?

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LYDIA. He avoids her.

HODDER. I—I'd not noticed that, Miss Desmond.

LYDIA. They seldom meet except—except when Frederic is present—ever since that night.

HODDER. Why, they appear to be—most friendly.

LYDIA. But they—they seem to be afraid of each other. Perhaps I imagine it, Dr. Hodder.

HODDER. I daresay you do, Miss Desmond. I must confess, however, that I don't understand why Mrs. Brood is not—er—going on this cruise with us. She's been Freddie's most devoted nurse—devotion itself. He—he leans on her quite as much as he does upon Brood—or you, Miss Desmond. It's rather odd, I'd say.

LYDIA. She is n't going. I've never asked why.

HODDER. No? I should think she'd want to be present when you and Freddie are married. Very strange.

LYDIA. The only thing she's said about it, is that her wedding present will be delivered to us in Vienna the day we're married in St. Stephen's. Dr. Hodder, have you noticed of late how much Frederic is getting to look like his father?

HODDER. I've always noticed that. No question

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as to who his father is. I've noticed something else, however. I did n't know his mother, of course — before my time — but I'll bet my soul he's got her personality. I notice it more and more as I see him. It's a good thing for a boy to have a generous touch of his mother in him. Catch what I mean? He looks like Brood, but inside he's his mother to the core, or I miss my guess completely.

LYDIA. [*Slowly.*] I wonder if — oh, it could n't be that.

HODDER. I know what you are thinking. Who knows? It may explain that strange new breath of life. Doctors don't believe much in souls, Miss Desmond. But I sometimes wonder — yes, I do, 'pon my word.

LYDIA. If his mother's soul was near — that night. [*She goes over to the vines at L. and looks down at the ground — involuntarily glancing up to the third story window, R.*]

HODDER. [*Quietly.*] Miss Desmond, the shock of that night has accomplished one thing for your husband-to-be — something, too, for your peace of mind.

LYDIA. What's that, Dr. Hodder?

HODDER. [*Seriously.*] He will never walk in his sleep again. [*She turns away in consternation.*]

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RIGGS. [*Arising suddenly and going toward R.*] Here comes Frederic. Ah, we'll soon be off now. [*Dawes follows him across and both wave their caps boyishly. Lydia and Hodder go up quickly.*]

[*Enter Ranjab at door R., followed by a sedate trained nurse, who is dressed for the street. She turns and waits for the invalid's chair in which Frederic is wheeled on by James Brood. The chair is halted at the top of the steps. Frederic is dressed very warmly, but is not covered by blankets. He carries a cane in his hand. Brood is dressed quietly for the voyage. Frederic's face is white and thin and his clothes hang loosely upon his frame.*]

HODDER. The captain of the Pinafore!

FREDERIC. Well, this is spring, is n't it? [*Starts to get out of chair.*]

HODDER. I would n't do that. Take your time. You may stand on your legs down here, but you must not walk down those steps. [*He and Ranjab lift the chair down the steps, Riggs and Dawes fussing about in vain effort to help.*]

DAWES. [*Assuming command.*] Gently, now! Get out of the way, Riggs! Confound you, sir, do you

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wish to be run down by the chair? Here! Fetch it right here, James! There! No — right here! We'll get the sun here if — er — that is, as soon as it gets around to this side of the house. What's that, Riggs?

RIGGS. The sun won't be back there till to-morrow morning.

DAWES. There you stand — taking up what little sun there is. Move over! Here! Right here, James. Ah, that's better. How are you, Frederic?

FREDERIC. [*Who has been wheeled to R. C.*] Like a fighting cock, Mr. Dawes. By Jove, you look like a sixteen-year-old boy. You should wear blue all the time — and a cap. [*He takes Lydia's hand and kisses it.*]

RIGGS. He should wear a blue ribbon all the time.

BROOD. I see you still wear them — good! Think of the example you are setting. All right, Frederic?

FREDERIC. Perfect. I'll stand on my pins for a minute or two. I say, Lydia, I'm doing pretty well, eh? A little wobbly yet, but — oh, they'll soon be good for a cross-country run. [*The nurse and Dr. Hodder support him as he stands up beside the chair, leaning on his cane.*] I tell you they're pretty flimsy, eh?

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LYDIA. Be careful, Frederic. This is only the third day you have tried it. Don't try to do too much.

FREDERIC. I've got to have 'em in good working order by the time we go marching down the aisle, little girl. Can't wobble any there. I need practice, that's all. How soon do we start, dad? Everything ready? Got my bags all out, Ranjab? The automobile?

RANJAB. It will be here in a few minutes, Mr. Frederic.

FREDERIC. In the alley, you know. No parade for me. I say, give me an arm, dad. Let's see if I can't walk out there to the garage. I —

HODDER. You stay right here, young man. You're a patient *yet*, not a free agent. Sit down! Not too much at a time. [*Frederic laughs and shakes his head, taking a few steps forward, leaning on Lydia.*]

[*Enter Mrs. Brood at R., attired in a quiet house gown, hatless. She stands for a moment at the top of the steps, smiling at him.*]

FREDERIC. Hello, Yvonne! How's this? I'm coming on, eh? God, it feels good to be out here in the air. Come down and — and feel my arm.

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More muscle than yesterday. How's that Lydia?
[*Lydia smiles as she feels his biceps.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Coming down to his side.*] Has Dr. Hodder given you permission to be on your feet so much? Is n't he too weak yet, Doctor? [*Frederic puts his arm on her shoulder.*]

HODDER. Must n't overdo it, that's all. Now sit down. Here, Miss Oliver — push the chair up. There! [*As Frederic sits down.*]

[*A hand-organ begins to play in the distance.*]

FREDERIC. Say! Listen! Hear that? That's spring sure enough. How I love the hurdy-gurdy! Go out and fetch it to the gate there, Ranjab.

MRS. BROOD. I think it sounds better at a distance, Frederic. They squeak so when you're too close. It's like the newsboy shouting "extra." You know it's an extra when he's a block away, but you don't know what it is when he's close beside you. Distance lends enchantment to the extra. [*To Brood.*] Is everything ready, James?

BROOD. [*Who has been watching her closely from behind Frederic's chair.*] Everything, Yvonne. We're only waiting for the Gunnings.

RIGGS. Get that taxicab, Ranjab? [*He and Dawes go up with Ranjab to the gate, where the Lascar is looking into the alley. Dr. Hodder and the nurse*

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cross over to sit side by side at L. C., where she apparently reads her notes to him from a small book.]

FREDERIC. [*After a painful pause.*] Yvonne, I — I wish you were going too. [*Brood glances quickly at her.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Her hand on Frederic's head.*] Who knows? I may follow you on the fastest ship that sails. If I should, I will wave to you as I pass by. Unless we should pass in the night.

LYDIA. Do you mean that, Yvonne? Will you cross?

MRS. BROOD. I have given it no thought, my dear. It was an idle speech. We are all in a playful mood to-day. [*A spasm of pain crosses her face. Brood looks at her steadily and then goes up to Ranjab and the two old men.*]

NURSE. [*Cautiously.*] Dr. Hodder, I'd like to ask why it is that Mrs. Brood is not accompanying us?

HODDER. My dear Miss Oliver, there are a great many questions I should like to ask, but I don't ask 'em.

NURSE. She is so pretty and so sad — at times — and so gay at others. I'm sure she'd like to go.

HODDER. [*Irrelevantly.*] What did he have for breakfast?

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[*Exit Ranjab, Brood, Riggs and Dawes at door R.*]

FREDERIC. Yvonne, we all understand each other once more.

MRS. BROOD. That may be, but we don't quite understand ourselves. We won't talk about it, please. I am not going on the cruise. That ends it.

LYDIA. The Gunnings have asked you time and again. They must think it strange.

MRS. BROOD. [*As Dr. Hodder and the nurse exit at R.*] My dear, if the Gunnings knew the part I played in our — our little tragedy, they, *at least*, would n't understand.

FREDERIC. But they'll never know. And, hang it all, Yvonne, Lydia and I won't be happy unless you come to our — our wedding. It's bad enough to go away and leave you behind.

LYDIA. Yvonne, I love you — you know that, don't you?

MRS. BROOD. Yes, Lydia. But — but this is very painful. I have never asked to be allowed to go. You know that, don't you? I've never asked.

FREDERIC. It is n't too late! We can hold the boat for —

MRS. BROOD. Frederic, listen to me. You know,

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both of you, what I have done and what I tried to do and failed. You know the story. We — we won't go into that. You understand and you — you love me — as I love you. I tried to take you away from James Brood through the agency of hate. Hatred failed. It was because I could not hate well enough. You take him, Lydia, through love. That's the difference. Real love, not the false love that I played my game with. It has all turned out well for you, my dears. It has turned out better for me than might have been expected. I am not disgraced, not despised. I might have been. James Brood has not yet compelled me to pay. He —

FREDERIC. He knows that you saved me. Yvonne, he is a fair man, a square man. You have seen how he has changed toward me. I am his son. He loves me. He will do anything in the world that I ask. If you will go with us, I'll see that he asks you this—*[starts to rise.]*

MRS. BROOD. No! You don't understand. I could not go that way. It would be *you*, not he that would want me. You see, I — I can't go that way.

FREDERIC. For — for my mother's sake, he'd —

MRS. BROOD. Don't! I don't want him to do anything for your mother's sake. I am Therese — not Matilde.

LYDIA. You mean?

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MRS. BROOD. That I am no longer fighting for Matilde. I am Therese! Do you understand?

LYDIA. You — you love him for — for yourself?

MRS. BROOD. I love that man! I *love* him. No, you can't understand. Nobody can. I don't understand myself. That's why I could n't tell him so, even if he'd permit me. There *is* a barrier. We — we are both afraid. He is afraid of me — I of him. No, you cannot understand. So, I shall go my way and he his. He loved the Matilde that was in me. The Matilde has gone out. I am Therese now — I have been for weeks. The thing that he loved in me is gone. I cannot bring it back. I cannot lure him now. I am Therese.

FREDERIC. It's a shame. You don't deserve it.

MRS. BROOD. [*Smiling.*] Women very seldom get what they deserve.

FREDERIC. I don't see how my father can help loving you. Think what you've done!

MRS. BROOD. That is n't it. He's got you back, Frederic. You *are* his son. He has given *everything* to you. Well, that is something of a triumph for me, at any rate. Or a triumph for poor Matilde, I should say. It was she — dead and gone loved one — who triumphed. That's the power of love. He loves her more than ever. I am Therese.

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LYDIA. What are you going to do?

MRS. BROOD. He has done me the honor not to turn me out into the street. Shall I go of my own accord? Perhaps I shall. Why should I stay? I said that I would stay here, Frederic, until you were well. He has not asked me to leave, nor has he asked me to stay. I suppose, as a woman of any delicacy, I should understand his silence — and go. I should not force him to remind me that you are well.

FREDERIC. Yvonne, — I can't call you Therese — I'm going to talk to dad. I am! He's a strange man — a hard man — but he *is* a man. He's got the biggest heart in the world. He can't close it to you — and you alone. I —

MRS. BROOD. My dear Frederic, — son of my sister, — a man's heart is not to be opened by another man. That's a woman's work. Now, let's talk of something else. We've gone over this for weeks. We can't mend matters. I am satisfied. I — I shall take my — as you Americans say — take my medicine. It is n't so bitter, after all, now that I know you are to be happy all your life. You and Lydia. And Matilde is justified. And James is satisfied. And I am a virtuous wife and a virtuous step-mother and a virtuous mother-in-law. I am an old woman now, to sit by the fire. But I'll never prattle!

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[Enter through gate, the manservant and the chauffeur, who proceed to carry the bags, etc., out into the alley.]

MRS. BROOD. Well, there goes the last of you — almost. Your bags out to the wagon. What a lot of them! The motor will soon be whisking you away. *[Suddenly tense and serious.]* Listen! Before any one comes out — before the Gunnings come — I want to say good-by. Quietly! We must not have a scene. We'll be very matter-of-fact about it.

LYDIA. Oh, this is a terrible way to —

FREDERIC. You won't go to the dock, Yvonne?

MRS. BROOD. No! There's salt enough in the river without my tears being added. Come! Your hands! There! I love you both. Be happy! God bless you. No kisses! No!

FREDERIC. You are a strange woman.

MRS. BROOD. When next we meet — well, I shall not be the only Mrs. Brood.

FREDERIC. We'll be back some day. A year or so, that's all. You'll be here?

MRS. BROOD. I am not going to leave this house unless I am turned out, Frederic. Do you hear? He will *have* to turn me out as he did my sister.

FREDERIC. Then you'll stay forever, Yvonne.

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LYDIA. [*Kisses her hand.*] I must! You gave him back to me.

MRS. BROOD. He was never mine to give. He came back to you from up there. [*Looking up.*] From a clear, pure, blue sky, my dear.

FREDERIC. Here is father. Leave us here alone — please!

MRS. BROOD. Frederic! Not one word to him. I can take care of myself.

[Enter Brood R., stopping up as the two women pass him, going out.]

BROOD. Lydia, we will start in a few minutes.

[Exit Mrs. Brood and Lydia, R.]

BROOD. [*Coming down.*] Well, my boy, how are you holding up? Is the excitement upsetting you?

FREDERIC. Not in the least. I'm eager to be off. See here, dad, why can't we take Yvonne? I don't like the idea of leaving her. That — er — that's all past, dad. You have said yourself that you don't blame her any longer. She's only human. She wanted to pay you out for a wrong you'd done — you see, don't you? But, it's over. She would have had a devilish revenge, but — instead of that she —

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BROOD. [*Raising a hand.*] My son, I'll tell you something that I have n't quite told to her. I fell in love with her once because an influence not her own overcame me. You may understand what I mean. There was something of your mother in her. It forged to the front and I felt it, but did not know. It was that part of Yvonne that I came to love — the part that brought back your mother to me. It was — I know it was — the spirit of Matilde that drew me to her. Well, that has gone. She is not the same. The illusion is gone. Now she is — Therese. My boy, she is not the woman I loved two months ago. She —

FREDERIC. Nor am I the one you hated two months ago. I am your son. She is your wife.

BROOD. There never has been a time when I really hated you. I tried to, but — but — well, that's all over. About Yvonne; she is not the same. She is a marvelous woman. I could not hate her. I have tried even that. But — I don't love her. I did when she looked at me with Matilde's eyes and spoke with Matilde's voice. But — she is not the same.

FREDERIC. Give her a chance, dad! Don't harden your heart against her. Dad, I know you'll come to care for her as Therese. Just give her a

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chance. You'll regret it if you don't. Hang it all, you're not an old man. You're less than fifty. Your heart has n't dried up yet. Your blood's still hot. And she is glorious! Don't leave her here, dad!

BROOD. That's it, my boy. I am not old. I am younger than I was fifteen years ago. That's what I'm afraid of. She could play with me — yes, she could! Don't stare! She could make a fool of me if I gave her a chance. And she — she never could love me as I want to be loved. [*Goes up stage in some agitation. Frederic looks after him and then smiles.*]

[Voices are heard inside the house, and then Dr. Hodder appears, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Gunning, Lydia and Mrs. Brood. Ranjab and the nurse stop on the steps, as the others come down. The Gunnings are attired for motoring. Ranjab now wears a hat and carries a small bag and Brood's hat and coat.]

GUNNING. [*Shaking Brood's hand.*] Well, all ready? Ship ahoy, there, Freddie! How are you? [*Comes down and shakes Frederic's hand.*]

MRS. GUNNING. We'll have you in a deck chair in less than an hour, old chap. I say, Mr. Brood,

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did n't you say anything about a champagne cocktail before we start? Well, this is before we start.

BROOD. The butler has them all ready, Maisie. Here they come. [*Ranjab gives him his hat and holds his coat for him as —*

[Enter Parker with trayful of champagne cocktails — Riggs and Dawes following close behind. As the drinks are being passed Riggs and Dawes deliberately remove their blue ribbons.]

HODDER. Here! None of that, Mr. Riggs.

RIGGS. Just one little one, Jim. That won't hurt. Champagne's the only thing that keeps me from getting seasick.

DAWES. Aw, now, Jim, you won't object to just this once. I — I want to drink a silent toast to — er — somebody.

RIGGS. A lady he met at Monte Carlo. By Jove, Dawes, I'm your friend. You sha'n't drink to her alone. [*Brood motions for the servant to pass the glasses to the old men.*]

GUNNING. Well, here's to those we leave behind — may they soon catch up!

FREDERIC. Here's to a heart of gold! [*Drinks to Mrs. Brood.*]

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MRS. BROOD. And here's to the heart that's cold! [*Drinks without looking at Brood. They all drink except Ranjab and the servants.*]

GUNNING. Where's your car, Mr. Brood? Let's be off. We can clear in an hour. Steam's up and luncheon's ready on board. The rest of the party's there by this time. Say, Hodder, will you and Miss Desmond come with us? Machine's out in front. Sorry you're not coming, Mrs. Brood. I daresay you intend to join us in — er — in Vienna.

MRS. BROOD. [*Smiling.*] If not, Mr. Gunning, I trust that we may meet in heaven. Good-by and — good luck! Take care of my — children!

MRS. GUNNING. That's what we're taking Dr. Hodder along for. Dr. Hodder, I have dreadful news for you. Old Mrs. Van Blossom is going to have Dr. Bosworth cut out her appendix to-morrow. She says she can't wait for you and she says you'll lose a lot of trade, going away like this.

HODDER. I don't see how. She's got but one appendix, I'm reliably informed. Come along, Miss Lydia. Miss Oliver, see that Frederic has a comfortable seat in the car — and, Mr. Brood, don't let your man run too fast. Good-by, Mrs. Brood. See you — er — see you soon.

MRS. BROOD. You will return long before the

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others, Dr. Hodder. [*In an aside to him.*] For God's sake, Doctor, don't let anything happen to spoil — spoil life for either of them.

HODDER. [*Shaking her hand.*] We are leaving our best life preserver behind.

RIGGS. Here's the automobile. Say, is that our taxi down there? Why the devil does n't he back up to the gate? [*He and Dawes shake hands with Mrs. Brood ceremoniously and exit at the gate, passing the chauffeur, who stands aside. Mrs. Brood goes up with Frederic and Lydia — each with an arm about her, the nurse wheeling the chair to one side and leaving it.*]

FREDERIC. Good-by, chair. [*At the gate, he kisses Mrs. Brood and passes out, Lydia also kissing her before she crosses to R., to follow Dr. Hodder and the Gunnings off.*]

MRS. GUNNING. [*Lingering.*] God bless you, Yvonne. I am sorry you are not going with us. If you change your mind, won't you join us on the other side — soon?

MRS. BROOD. Thank you, Maisie. If — if I change my mind, yes! Good-by!

[*Exit Mrs. Gunning.*]

[*Re-enter Ranjab.*]

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RANJAB. [*To Brood.*] Mr. Frederic is ready, master.

BROOD. [*At center. — Mrs. Brood standing up, looking at him steadily.*] Wait for me out there, Ranjab.

[*Exit Ranjab — with a hard stare at Mrs. Brood.*]

MRS. BROOD. [*Coming down, quietly.*] Good-by, James.

BROOD. [*After a long pause.*] Yvonne, they all want me to take you along with us.

MRS. BROOD. I don't see how that is possible.

BROOD. It is n't possible.

MRS. BROOD. That is why I think it is better that I should not go to the yacht to say — good-by.

BROOD. [*Nervously.*] We've threshed it all out, in our own way, Yvonne, you and I. We understand each other. Before I go, I want to tell you this: I have n't the least feeling of resentment toward you. I can now look calmly back upon what you would have done without a single thought of condemnation. As I said to you last night, you had what you considered to be a just cause. You failed to accomplish your end —

MRS. BROOD. But I accomplished something much better, James. You must admit that my failure was a success, after all.

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BROOD. Yes. It was. And you have faced the result with the finest courage I have ever seen. You have stood by your guns. I like courage — I like the man or woman who can smile in the face of defeat — who can admit defeat and not ask for mercy.

MRS. BROOD. Go on. I am waiting for you to turn me out of the house. This is the psychological moment. We have led up to it nicely.

BROOD. I can't turn you out of my house — I never could have done that. If you choose to go of your own accord, I will not interpose an objection. That's all.

MRS. BROOD. Do you want me to go or to stay?

BROOD. I want you to stay.

MRS. BROOD. I am a wife — don't forget that.

BROOD. And I am your husband. I don't want you to forget that. I don't intend that you shall ever forget that you are bound to me — that you are my property — if it is in my power to help it.

MRS. BROOD. You *are* a very real man.

BROOD. I took you for better or for worse and I'll try to keep you. I know you are a good woman. I don't believe that you have ever loved me, that's all. Better women than you have not loved their husbands, however.

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MRS. BROOD. Do you love me?

BROOD. No. Not now.

MRS. BROOD. You did. That much I know. And you know that there are times when I loved you in spite of myself. Well, James, I am ready to confess that I *do* love you now — all the time. This is no time for hysterics. I sha'n't moan and tremble and plead. I am not that kind. There is a time for deadly earnestness. We have found out all there is to know about each other. I love you with all my soul. Still, I am ready to go without a word if you tell me to do so.

BROOD. I *have* loved you, Yvonne. There was never in this world anything like it. You — you could have stirred the heart of a stone man.

MRS. BROOD. Ah, I was but playing at love then, James. Now I would be in earnest. Now I would show you what real love is. You've never even guessed it before. I found months ago that you had the power to love magnificently. It was the power to love nobly. It came over me time and again that you, in your heart, could not have been cruel to my sister. There must have been something in you that could make her love you to the day of her death. Of late I have come to the conviction that Matilde could have won out against you if she had

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been stronger, less conscious of the pain she felt. She could have set you straight, James, if she had stood her ground — here! If she had stayed in spite of you and fought you — here! Then, you would have gone down before her — for you were always a beaten man, and you knew it. But she did not have the strength to stand and fight — as I would have stood and fought. Ah, you know that!

BROOD. There never would have been a mistake of that kind — with us, Yvonne.

MRS. BROOD. Never! Well, it comes down to this: I love you now and you do not love me. More than once have I whispered to the Buddha up there that I love you — more than once, even when I was seeking to give you the direst pain. The tables are turned. I am your wife, but — you see, you are not my husband at heart. James, I want you to love me again, for myself — for Therese, not because the blood of Matilde is warm within me. I want to fight now to get back the love I once played with and despised. Can I hope for that, James? Answer at once. I sha'n't keep you waiting.

BROOD. [*Taking her hands and looking straight into her eyes — seriously.*] Yvonne, I will be frank with you. I am a deliberate man. I am not likely to be fooled twice. You fooled me once. I have not

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forgotten my lesson. There is n't a woman on God's earth that I admire more than I admire you. There is no other woman like you. I won't say that I could not love you. I don't know. You are not the same. You are the real woman now. I have taken the blow you gave and I have suffered and I have found a measure of joy in all that has come out of it. But I am not happy. I am not sure in my heart that I am doing the right thing — in leaving you behind. You saved his life after I deliberately sought to — to kill him. Ah, my son!

MRS. BROOD. I do not forget that I was recklessly intent upon injuring his soul by subtler means than you employed — although I would not have believed it at the time.

BROOD. That is past and gone. It was your mission. The world may suspect, but it does not know the true story of that ugly night in March. You and I know, and Frederic and Lydia. Ranjab knows. No one else. The world will think it strange that you are left behind while the rest of us fly away to pleasant lands — to the marriage altars and shadowless days. And yet I have decided — that you are *not* to go.

MRS. BROOD. [*Straight and defiant.*] Yes. That is decided.

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BROOD. Will you stay here, Yvonne? In this house?

MRS. BROOD. You ask me to?

BROOD. No. I command you to.

MRS. BROOD. As a — prisoner, paying a penalty, — serving her time.

BROOD. Serving *my* time. A year — a year and a half, that means. In this house — not outside in the world, but in this house. A prisoner — yes, but a voluntary prisoner. If you are here when I come back, then I'll know that your love is real. I'll *know* it, then. Now, I am afraid! I have been fooled.

MRS. BROOD. [*Slowly.*] James Brood, I will be here when you come back. Your prisoner — here.

BROOD. [*Calmly.*] Then, Yvonne, we will talk of love — if there *is* love.

MRS. BROOD. Yes. Now go. No, I don't expect you to kiss me. Good-by, James. Good luck and — Godspeed!

BROOD. [*Holding her hand.*] Good-by.

MRS. BROOD. I will go with you as far as the gate of my prison. [*The honk-honk of the motor is heard.*] They are impatient to take you away. Good-by.

BROOD. Good-by, — Therese!

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[Exit Brood at gate. She stands there and waves her hand to those outside, who shout back good-byes. Then the machine chugs, rumbles, and whirrs as it starts off — a distant honk-honk signifying its turn into the street. Mrs. Brood remains up stage for a moment, looking off, then, with a glance about her, taking in the balcony, Brood's room, etc., she comes down, a confident smile gradually displacing the look of dejection.]

MRS. BROOD. *[Stopping C. and giving a comprehensive gesture suggesting acquiescence to her entire surroundings.]* Well, it is n't such a horrid prison, after all, even though it is little less than solitary confinement he has sentenced me to. I don't know any one here now but the servants, the dogs and the birds. He was careful to take all my acquaintances away with him. Ah, he is a clever man — he is a shrewd man. He will find out for himself. *[Sits down on the edge of the fountain and reflects.]* I can wait a year, ten years for him to come back. He is worth a woman's whole life time. I'll be lonely. Oh, how lonely I'll be. But I'll stay in prison. I'll scale no walls nor break any bars. I'll stay! *[Taking out her gold cigarette case and matches, she luxuriously leans back and lights a cigarette.]* He does n't

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take into account that he really loves me. It will be good for him to think of poor little me here all alone and unhappy and — afraid of my shadow in this big house. Men's hearts are funny things. They are tender in spite of themselves. He'll soon begin to pity me — all alone. I — I should n't be surprised if he cabled for me to come. [*Smokes reflectively.*] I'm not so sure of that. I think I'd love him all the more if he did n't! But he'll come back — some day. Ah, me! I can wait!

[*The hand-organ in the distance begins to play "La Paloma." She smiles and puffs idly at her cigarette.*]

CURTAIN

[*End of Play.*]

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